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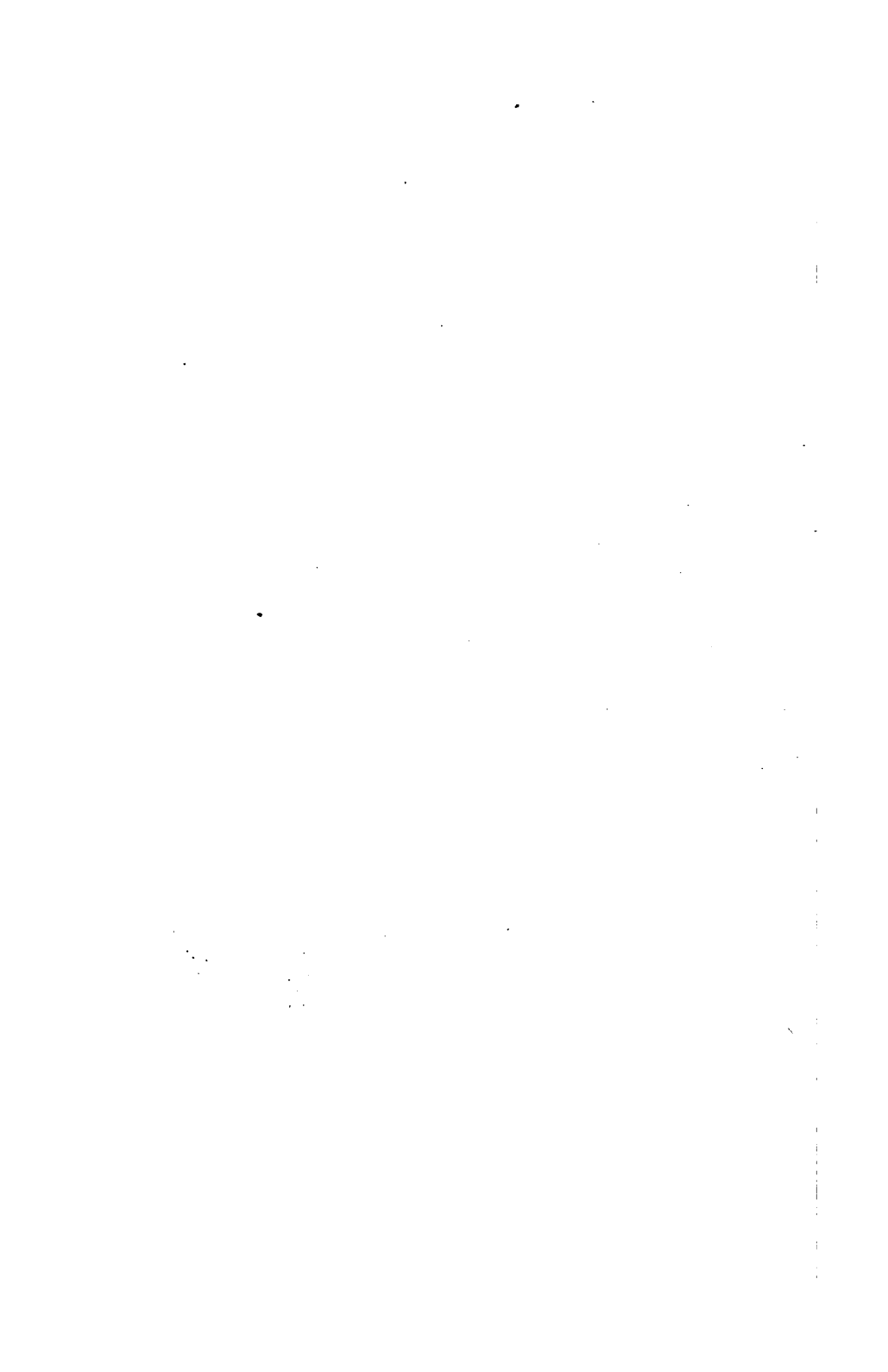




THE GOVERNESS;

OR,

POLITICS IN PRIVATE LIFE.



THE GOVERNESS;

OR,

POLITICS IN PRIVATE LIFE.

BY THE DAUGHTER OF
THE AUTHOR OF THE "BALANCE OF COMFORT."

"The life of a Governess, however dull and monotonous it may be thought, has pleasures of a very refined and superior nature."

Memoir of M. J. GRAHAM.

"The civilities I have met with from opposite sets of people, have hindered me from being violent or sour to any party."



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THE GOVERNESS.

CHAPTER I.

IT has always been a favourite opinion of mine, and one which extensive intercourse with society has not induced me to forego, that the world was made up of "men, women, and governesses." This idea did not originate in my own early home, for I was educated by my father; but in the morning calls, or visits of a longer period, which I was in the habit of making with my mother at the houses of our thinly scattered aristocracy. Even at this distance of time, I have a perfect recollection of the unhappy and ill-used individuals who rarely failed to present themselves on these occasions. I was too young to be a participator of the conversation of the drawing-room, and was consequently often sent to visit my contemporaries of the school-room; or when this was not the case, we were summoned to the one o'clock dinner, which was to constitute the luncheon of all the morning visitors who might chance to appear at that hour. Yes, even now, I see before me the pretty interesting-looking girl, who, already seated at the table with five or

more children, was the only individual of the party to whom none was introduced, to whom no sort of attention was paid beyond that of desiring her to "help Emma to the breast of the fowl," or to see that "Julia ate more like a lady," and who, in the midst of the ravages committed on flesh and fowl, must have risen from her comfortless dinner hungry. This was the "Governess." If we were staying in the house, and a quadrille was proposed, it was the "governess" who was "sent for" to preside unrelieved at the piano, and who was dismissed at the conclusion of our amusement with the simple acknowledgment of "that will do; thank you Miss Duncombe." To that same Miss Duncombe, unnoticed and obscure, I, as a girl of sixteen, not introduced, was indebted for some of the pleasantest hours I passed at Charlfont, the seat of a Mr. Maynard, where I frequently paid a visit of some days with my mother; to the pretty and amiable governess, I invariably retreated, when it was decided that there was no room for me in the carriage, or when the whisperings of certain matrons gave me a quiet hint to withdraw. By the bye, I think the life of a girl too old for lessons, and too young for secrets, not much more enviable than that of the class of whom I am writing. I never failed to return from my visit to the school-room, or from my walk with its gentle mistress, without feeling I had learned something which made me better and wiser. One good feeling I certainly acquired, and I trust I have it still,—always to commiserate, and as far as I could, to relieve the irksomeness of the life of a "governess."

I have, from peculiar circumstances, seen much of those hapless beings, condemned by hard fate to earn

their daily bread by the sacrifice of their comfort, their independence, and of all those finer feelings which appear to be (most unfortunately) interwoven with their very frames ; and after long experience, I do not hesitate to declare that the finest principles, and the most exalted friendship, I have ever known, I discovered (and shall cherish to my latest hour) in a governess. Cooper is, I believe, the only author who has written any thing to exalt from their state of depression this interesting division of the world. In his exquisite novel of the "Red Rover," his character of Mrs. Wyllys will ever be read with pleasure by the liberal and enlightened of this country ; and glad indeed shall I be, if, in the following pages, I can draw a picture that shall tend to call the attention of the rich and the great to a subject I cannot but consider of vital importance to the cause of education and to humanity. I might perhaps be inclined to doubt whether the rich and the great will read a book bearing the title of "The Governess," but that I trust to the assurance I now make, that *their* vices and follies are not forgotten ; and I have ever remarked, that those novels have found easiest access to the dressing-rooms of the fine lady, which have most elaborately portrayed her follies,—and to the Britchka of the idle and profligate travellers of the other sex, which have most fully exposed their vices. On this ground therefore I rest my pretensions to *their* favour ; to a better feeling I am willing to attribute the suffrages of the amiable wife and mother,—to the earnest hope and humble belief that she may learn something from the story of the "Governess."

CHAPTER II.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed little Fanny Elphinstone, climbing on a chair, the better to enable her to see, from the window of her mother's dressing-room, a carriage of which she had only heard the wheels; "this must be the new governess! yes; she is getting out of the carriage, and — why, mamma, she looks quite like a lady!"

"'Fine feathers make fine birds,' Miss Elphinstone," said a well dressed waiting woman, who was busily employed in arranging the luxuriant tresses of a young and very beautiful woman, who having paid little attention to the exclamation of the child, quietly, and in a tone of considerable sweetness, begged her maid would never again address a similar remark to Miss Elphinstone, adding, it was extremely vulgar, and totally unfit for her ears. No comment however, on the uncalled-for impertinence was made, and an inaudible muttering from the reprov'd Abigail would probably have terminated all mention or even recollection of the arrival, but for the entrance of a person, whose portly presence, and rustling silk gown, together with a certain consequential vulgarity of manner, proclaimed her at once to be the housekeeper.

"The new governess is come, ma'am: I have told her you were on the point of leaving home, and have ordered Philips to serve her dinner in the oak par-

lour; have you any orders to give respecting her, ma'am?"

"No, I believe not," said Mrs. Elphinstone, in answer to the important personage just introduced, and regarding her own lovely person in the huge glass before her, preparatory to descending to her carriage,—"no orders certainly," she continued: "I hope she will be comfortable, poor thing!"

"Oh ma'am, as to that," rejoined Mrs. Stacey, "I don't think she wants much pity, for she seems to me as proud as if she were a real lady." Whether Mrs. Elphinstone were disposed to make any reply to this remark or not, was never known; for the voice of her husband in the gallery telling her she was very late, prevented all further conversation in the dressing-room. The lady's maid and Mrs. Stacey descended to that emporium of impertinence the housekeeper's room, and the little Fanny ran to the nursery to tell Isabella she had seen the new governess before any body.—Whilst Mr. Elphinstone and his lovely wife are pursuing their way to Lytton Place I will give a brief sketch of the family into which my heroine (for such I declare her to be,) has been so unceremoniously introduced. Now as I like to please myself with the idea that I am to have a certain portion of aristocratic readers, I cannot help sometimes amusing myself with the horror they will feel on finding a governess,—one of that race they are so accustomed to despise,—is really to be the heroine of a novel. So it is, my well-born and haughty readers; but do not fear; I will redeem the pledge I gave in my first chapter, and the follies of "men and women" shall be mingled with the virtues of the "governess."

At a county ball at —, Mr. Elphinstone saw, for the first time, the beautiful Miss Lyster, the only unmarried daughter of a baronet of that name, a man of large fortune in the county of which he was the tory representative. They danced, talked, and laughed together; he was enchanted with *her* beauty, she with *his* good humour. Sir Charles Lyster readily yielded to a proposition on the part of Mr. Elphinstone, to shoot at Lytton Park the following week, where, after remaining a month, and doing every thing but shoot, he became the declared lover, and in a fortnight more, the husband of the fair Fanny Lyster. They were both very much in love; but of each other's tastes, or pursuits, or tempers, they knew just as much as on their first introduction at the — ball.

Mrs. Elphinstone was one of those characters, in whom it is difficult to say whether the good or the bad preponderated. She was sweet tempered and naturally kind-hearted; but indolent, and from example and precept, haughty. I say from example and precept, for Lady Lyster was of that branch of the favoured of the land, who leaving the formation of their daughters' minds to the care of a hireling and a stranger, gave them this one command,—never to condescend to those who are not admitted by birth and long descent into the sacred pale of aristocratic privileges, and who enforce obedience to this rule by their own undeviating pride. To the fulfilment of this command the elder Miss Lysters found no difficulty. Fanny sometimes felt she should like to know the smiling and lady-like looking girls who attracted her attention on a Sunday, when, on de-

scending from the splendid carriage which had conveyed the baronet's family to church, she saw quietly walking by their father's side the daughter of the clergyman. Her mother's formal recognition of the party, however, and her sister's total neglect of it, convinced her all attempt on her part to know them would be useless, and she took her daily walk with Madame Gautier with added disrelish, after seeing the humble daughters of the clergyman merrily pursuing, in the evening, their way over stiles and ditches which were not deemed orthodox for aristocratic limbs to cross. Thus, with the precepts of her lady-mother, and under the auspices of Madame Gautier, the seeds of good in the youthful Fanny were suffered to remain uncultivated, whilst hauteur, indolence, and vanity found a ready nurture.

In becoming mistress of Elphinstone, she saw no reason for changing her usual mode of proceeding; indeed, her mother assured her that as the daughter-in-law of the Earl of Malden, and as the wife of the Honourable Mr. Elphinstone, it was additionally incumbent on her to select her acquaintance with caution, and to restrain even yet further those good-humoured smiles which, in spite of her education, she sometimes felt inclined to bestow on the wives and daughters of the tenantry, and even on those same unpretending girls who, in her earlier youth, had been objects of envy to the high-born Fanny. Her husband, good tempered as herself, and even more careless, saw no reason why she should depart from aristocratic rules, except on the occasion (latterly a somewhat frequent one) of a contested election, when Mrs. Elphinstone was desired to be particularly liberal in her purchases,

and gracious in her smiles, at the miserable shops of the town her husband had the honour of representing. It was hardly possible to refuse a vote to the husband of one who looked so pretty and smiled so sweetly as Mrs. Elphinstone. To be sure, the smiles would disappear on the day of chairing, and would be seen no more until a change of ministry or some equally common events rendered another demand on the gallantry of the electors of — necessary. Wiser men, however, than they have been swayed by a woman's smile; and well would it be if every M.P. owed his success to so legitimate an influence.

At the time when my history opens, the Honourable pair had been eight years man and wife; they were the parents of four lovely children, the two elder of whom were to be the pupils of the newly arrived governess. Their tastes had become tolerably well known to each other: Fanny found she had married a fox-hunter, who, for six months in the year, lived in a red coat; kept her awake by the noise which seems to constitute the chief pleasure of a follower of foxes, and retarded dinner every day. It is true she had passed some winters in town, to be presented, introduced, and made still more unfit for a wife and mother, by the Countess of Malden. Her sisters had both married men of fashion and rank, and commiserated Mrs. Elphinstone's unhappiness, in having married a man who hated London; and in having two of her beautiful children born in the very meridian of the London winter, that is to say, in the months of April and June.

Her only brother, Captain Lyster, passed much of his time at Elphinstone, and sympathized sin-

cerely with his sisters in poor Fanny's misfortunes, of which, however, he deemed the greatest to be the fact, of her having married so very noisy a man as Elphinstone.

On the day following that on which my history opens, Mrs. Elphinstone returned from her visit to Lytton Place, and having inquired if her children were well, she established herself on the sofa of her dressing-room, and was busily occupied with a volume of the pretty novel of "Anne Grey," when it occurred to her she had never seen the new inmate of her family. "I must certainly desire her to come to me," she said, half audibly. "I wonder where Lady Jane Spencer's letter is, for I absolutely forget her name." She opened, as she spoke, the delicate ivory letter-box, which stood on the table beside her, and taking from it numerous epistles, at length discovered the one she sought. "Oh, here it is,—highest possible character,—lady-like manners,—daughter of an officer;—yes, that is just what they say of all governesses;—but where does Lady Jane mention her name?—oh, the daughter of a Colonel Walcot!—that is not a bad name; I fancy I must have heard it somewhere before." She sounded her little silver bell, and, on her maid's answering the summons, she desired her to tell Miss Walcot she would see her in her dressing-room.

Mrs. Elphinstone's ideas of governesses did not extend beyond the old and untidy Madame Gautier, who had watched over her own youthful days;—or, the over-dressed looking girl she had seen one morning at ——, when she was making purchases, and dispensing smiles, on the eve of a contested election.

She absolutely started from her reclining position, when the door of her dressing-room opened, and Mrs. Marsham announced Miss Walcot. Madame Gautier, and the smart little governess, of —, rose in strong contrast to the perfectly elegant and dignified looking woman who stood before her, and astonishment for a moment kept her silent. There needed, however, no recollection of other governesses to render Miss Walcot an object of surprise and interest; her exquisitely neat attire, her tall and dignified figure, together with a look of pensive gravity, could not fail to strike the proudest and coldest of her beholders.

Mrs. Elphinstone could recall no precedent for asking a governess to be seated in her presence; and she would have felt half culpable, could her lady mother have entered at that moment, and have seen how her early precepts must have been forgotten, ere her honourable daughter could have desired a person holding Miss Walcot's situation to be seated.

"I am sorry," she began, "I could not see you yesterday; but you are, perhaps, aware I dined from home, and am only just returned. I hope you had all you wanted, and that Fanny and Isabella have not been very noisy. They cannot read at all; indeed, I do not think Isabella knows her letters; for the ivory set which were sent Fanny from town were put into the carriage one morning, in order to amuse Horace, and he dropped them all from the windows of the carriage; but you will desire Mrs. Stacey to inform me of all you want, and I will endeavour to procure it from —, or at all events from town."

The beautiful mother appeared completely ex-

hausted by this exertion for her children ;—and, after a minute's silence, Miss Walcot asked if, when Mrs. Elphinstone found herself less unwell, she would do her the favour of giving her directions as to the plan to be pursued for her little girls.

“ Oh ! ” replied Mrs. Elphinstone, unclosing her eyes, “ I am not unwell, I assure you ;—but as to plans, I must leave all that to you. I must only beg, that my daughters may be early taught the immense importance of distinguishing between those of their own, and of a different rank ; and, I must request, they may never be allowed to speak to an inferior, either in or out of the house.”

With a look, in which it would be difficult to say whether pity or surprise predominated, the governess withdrew to her own room.

CHAPTER III.

AT the age of three-and-twenty, Gertrude Walcot lost her father, and was told, it was necessary she should exert her splendid talents in procuring her daily bread. She felt deep regret at the thought of quitting her mother, but no sigh escaped her as she dwelt on the prospect before her. Accustomed, from her earliest infancy, both from the precepts and example of her parents, to look on every event as it

occurred, as coming from the immediate hand of infinite wisdom and mercy, she prepared to obey the unexpected mandate.

During a visit of some weeks at the country house of Lady Jane Spencer, she had been introduced to, and seen much of a Mr. Spencer Beresford, a man three or four years older than herself, and of very large expectations. He shot, hunted, and visited; but, whilst his income was sufficient for his own immediate gratifications, it was infinitely too small for all orthodox, that is, all aristocratic ideas of married comforts. Though far from equalling Miss Walcot in intellectual acquirements, he, (as is generally the case,) prized and admired them in her; and, when told by Lady Jane Spencer, that in consequence of Colonel Walcot's death, her young friend would be compelled to leave her mother, and seek her means of subsistence from a cold world, he, with the characteristic selfishness of his sex, entreated her to defer, or, rather to give up all idea of quitting home, and to promise to become his wife when the death of an aged relative should leave him at liberty to make her so. The half-implied wish, the look of anxious suspense on the countenance of her mother, added to the regard she had long felt for Mr. Spencer Beresford, induced her to yield a half reluctant consent.

Gertrude Walcot was too well versed in the human heart, even in that extraordinary piece of mechanism, (and what some people have even ventured to doubt the existence of) a *man's* heart, not to feel that much uncertainty existed as to the continuance of Spencer

Beresford's attachment to herself; he admired her because she was admired by others; and he felt a certain degree of pride, in appropriating to himself, talents and sense so superior, as those which even at three-and-twenty elicited themselves in Gertrude Walcot. He had been sought and courted by ladies of all ages,—by the young, because he was gay, and the fashion,—by the elder ones, who had the young to dispose of, because his expectations were brilliant, and his pretensions to aristocracy tolerably well made out.

Spencer Beresford, like all men who live to the age of thirty unmarried, had become suspicious of the attention he had received; he had turned from more than one beautiful girl, in the belief that her evident anxiety to dance or ride with him, arose more from anticipations of the future, than from any disinterested admiration of himself; then Gertrude Walcot was so clever, so intellectual,—it was so delightful to be loved by such a woman.

Their engagement continued four years, during which time it would have been difficult to have decided whether pain or pleasure most frequently dwelt in the pure breast of our heroine. Her lover's visits were at first tolerably frequent; but there were times, even during those visits, when poor Gertrude would have been glad not to have divided his time and his attentions with a ball, a bow meeting, or a favourite hunter; and she was vexed at being asked (whilst reading aloud some beautiful author), if she remembered what were the "fixtures" for the following week? Poor Gertrude! hers was an unequal

warfare ; her obscurity, her love, her bright intellect, had little chance with the man of pleasure, the courted and admired man of the world !

At the expiration of four years, her mother died ; and Beresford discovered it would be selfish longer to indulge a hope he never might be able to realize. It is unnecessary to enter into a detail of the arguments he used to persuade Gertrude it were better for her to pursue her early plan of leaving home, than to squander further the time, which from the robust appearance of the old peer, whose death he had so long anticipated, they might never be able to redeem.

Many of my female readers will look only to their own sad history, to understand the nature of these arguments. To my readers of the other sex, it were worse than useless to impart lessons of sophistry,—their own selfishness will not fail to supply at the time of need. Suffice it to say, with the high-minded woman, they were sufficient : she entered on a world of care and sorrow ; her lover refused an invitation to accompany a gay party to Newmarket ; the pheasants at the Knolls rested one day beside Sunday, and for eight-and-forty hours the intellectual and right minded Gertrude was remembered with an intensity of regret, at which her former lover was astonished, and which yielded only to the information, that a celebrated hunter in the neighbourhood was to be disposed of actually for the small sum of two hundred guineas.

It may perhaps be asked how such a woman as we have described, could love a man so unworthy of her in two great points on which women are so sensitive ; namely, in intellect and in devotion,—in that heart's devotion which a woman never fails to give, and to

hope for, and which she may occasionally receive. For an answer to this, I refer to the fact, that in no one instance of love or marriage, which have ever come under my observation, can I recall one which the minds of the two parties were equally matched; either a very clever and learned man marries a pretty simpleton, or a woman of superior acquirements and intelligence unites herself to a man with few ideas beyond his immediate profession or occupation. Our professions, generally speaking, are now so worthily filled, that it is wrong to speak of those engaged in them with even a shadow of disrespect. Those who have only occupations, by which I mean, those scions of the aristocracy, who hunt, shoot, dine, and do many other amusing things, which occupy their time, instead of their heads, are not so sacred in my eyes; and it is by no means uncommon to see these gentlemen game-keepers,—these “tenth transmitters of a foolish face,” uniting themselves to really superior women. I shall not attempt to account for the apparent inconsistency of either sex. I shall only account to my readers for that which appears inconsistency in Gertrude Walcot. She accepted Spencer Beresford’s proposals, because he proffered her his love at a moment when, softened by grief for the loss of a beloved parent, her heart was particularly susceptible of all the kindlier impressions; nor must the fact be suppressed, that the extreme popularity of his character had its effect even on the sensible Gertrude. In the seclusion in which she afterwards resided, she saw no one with whom to compare him, had she been so inclined; for of the many who had fluttered round her in the days of her better fortune, he only appeared

in the day of adversity ; and though, we may dearly love in the midst of a brilliant crowd, of which we are perhaps the chief magnet, yet those only who have felt it, can tell of the intensity of that affection, which is nursed in adversity and neglect. In breaking off his engagement with a woman he still really loved, Beresford believed himself actuated by a good motive, and would have felt astonished had he been told, that self alike actuated him in making and in dissolving their engagement. To the world, however, his conduct was a matter of indifference, and no word of reproach passed the lips of his victim : to a casual observer it might have been a question, whether she felt very deeply the blighting of her fond hopes ; her step was firm as ever, her smile as sweet ; but of the bitterness of regret which lay buried in her " heart of hearts," she alone knew the extent. To one person only, a female friend, was the subject ever alluded to, and perhaps we cannot do better than give a letter to that lady, written two or three weeks after her arrival at Elphinstone.

" Elphinstone, May 6.

" If you have heard from Mrs. Daubeney since my departure from Bowers Giffard, you will doubtless have learnt a tale of my stoicism and indifference, which will have surprised you. My good aunt has no idea of the " grief which does not speak," and as long as you can enter with apparent cheerfulness into the events that are passing around you, and that you refrain from tears, she believes you cannot be very unhappy. Sure I am, such was the impression with which she saw me depart. You, my dear Lady

Mary, who better know human nature, and who have been yourself but too severely tried, will more easily understand the feelings of your poor Gertrude on quitting the beloved home of her youth, to enter at once on that most bitter of trials, the duties of a governess.

“As compared with others of the unhappy class to which I now belong, I have no doubt I am a very fortunate person; for I am at least not interfered with by Mrs. Elphinstone, and am tolerably well waited on by her servants. I am ready to acknowledge that my ideas of governesses and school-rooms were very narrow, bounded I believe, by what I have so often seen and shuddered at, when visiting at Netley. The wretchedly ill-furnished room, a perfect antidote to study, called the school-room, and the formal, cold, but most obsequious person who presided there,—she who appeared to be in subjection to even the little unruly children she taught. I pitied, whilst I despised her! My notions on children too, I suppose, have been conceived at Netley, for I really dreaded them almost more than any other part of the long catalogue of ills attendant on governesses.

“My short experience here has certainly taught me to feel there may be exceptions even to the rule I had laid down on this subject. I do not imagine I am to attribute the elegance of my accommodations to any effort on the part of Mrs. Elphinstone, but simply to the fact that at Elphinstone, every thing is elegant and commodious. It is true I dine at two o'clock, but my table is well served, my wants attended to by well-behaved servants, and my little companions, though ignorant of their letters even, are so

perfectly well bred, so scrupulously brought up, as never to sin against the forms of propriety in eating and drinking; from their cradles they have been desired to do every thing 'like ladies,' and they certainly have been obedient to this command. They are very lovely and interesting children, and are, I think, beginning to reconcile themselves a little to the necessary discipline.

"Mrs. Elphinstone I have only seen three times in as many weeks; but I should like to see more of her, for I cannot help fancying she is not really the heartless fine lady she is represented. I can scarcely do justice to her beauty or her perfect elegance of person and manner. Mr. Elphinstone I have seen only once, and that at church. Religion appears to be practised here, because it is right and proper, as a duty, not as a pleasure; in short, every thing at Elphinstone is perfectly *correct*. The children have just informed me that Sir Charles and Lady Lyster are expected in their way from London, 'and then,' added the little Fanny, 'you will be obliged to go into the saloon for grandmamma to see you.'

"I have as yet had no difficulty in adhering to the rules I have laid down for myself. I suppose Lady Lyster, with whose character I am well acquainted, will put my resolutions to the test. I remember her many years ago at Lady Jane Spencer's, desiring that pretty Italian girl who lived there, might be sent for down for her to 'look at.' Conceive Gertrude Walcot being *sent* for down to be looked at!

"On the subject nearest my heart, my rebellious heart, I have not yet written.—Alas! it is (to you I confess it) still a subject of deep and painful interest

to me. My love and regard were so interwoven with my nature, that employment, and religion, and constant occupation will be necessary to disunite them; but they will be disunited. I have at length brought myself to feel I have been unfairly dealt with, and there is a feeling in my heart as strong as my love, and far more lasting, — it is my pride!—Yes, Beresford, once so affectionately esteemed, it has power to drive even your image from its long resting place. I have said too much on this subject; it shall be mentioned no more between us, my dearest Lady Mary. Pity my weakness, and continue to love your own attached

“GERTRUDE.”



CHAPTER IV.

“So you have taken a governess at last,” said Lady Lyster to Mrs. Elphinstone, as she saw her little grandchildren run past the windows of the dining-room the day after her arrival at Elphinstone; “where did you get her? If you had written to me, I could have recommended you a person who would have suited you, I dare say, extremely well; she was eleven years at Mrs. Claverings of Netley, and only left on the marriage of Mrs. Haughton. I never saw so obliging a person as she was,” continued Lady

Lyster; "I do assure you, when I was staying last at Netley, she arranged my hair for me every day whilst Martyn was ill, and she always folded up all the newspapers to your papa so very neatly; she would have been the very person for you."

"I am not sure of that," replied Mrs. Elphinstone; "for as I never expect my governess to officiate as my maid or as my secretary, I would rather have a lady in my school-room from whom my children may learn to be lady-like, and I hope, some day, clever. Besides, I really think it most essential that a governess should be at least very nice looking; and I am sure that hideous woman would have frightened the children. But I have not told you who I have engaged as their governess; she is a Miss Walcot, a daughter of the late Colonel Walcot. She was highly recommended by Lady Jane Spencer, whose friend she is; she is very elegant, and a most perfect gentlewoman."

"The very worst person in the world, Mrs. Elphinstone. There is nothing so intolerable as a well-born, and what people call a lady-like governess; a sort of school-room princess, who will do literally nothing she is desired to do."

"If she does all she undertakes, I think it sufficient," said Mr. Elphinstone; "and I agree with Fanny. I have no wish she should assume the duties of the waiting woman."

"And then, such enormous salaries!" said Lady Lyster, without regarding the remark of her son-in-law: "when my girls were educated, Madame Gautier had only fifty pounds a year, and"—

"Oh, don't talk of Madame Gautier," said Fanny; "even at this distance of time I shudder at her name."

"You may shudder or not, as you please, Mrs. Elphinstone. "I can only say no young ladies were ever more perfectly elegant and lady-like, than the Miss Lysters; or made, take them altogether," (this was said with emphasis) "better matches." •

"For which good fortune," said Captain Lyster, who had hitherto taken no part in the discourse, "I imagine they were but little indebted to the dirty, slatternly French woman, of fifty pounds a year. My sisters were gentlewomen born; they had your ladyship for an example, and from the moment of her entering the house, agreed in despising their second-rate governess."

"As a proof that you are very harsh in your judgment of poor Madame Gautier, I must tell you that Lady Oakeley is most anxious to procure for her own girls a person of her recommending."

"Which proves nothing," said Captain Lyster; "I never thought Augusta particularly refined in her ideas, and I suspect she is thinking more of the small salary than of her children's welfare."

"Brothers never judge correctly of their sisters," angrily rejoined Lady Lyster. "Lady Oakeley was the most splendid person at the last drawing-room; and indeed she always is delightful,—so correct, so exclusive; she has so much conduct."

"Of Lady Oakeley's unbending *hauteur*, or the splendour of her diamonds, I never for a moment doubted," said the provoking brother; "of her fitness

to select a governess for her children, I am not so sure. Pray does Lady Frederick Howard seek for a prototype of Madame Gautier to form the minds of her children?"

"Oh! Julia's children are mere babies yet; I only wish, when they are old enough to require a governess, their mother may be as fortunate in her selection of one, as I was." Mrs. Elphinstone, who was aware that the arguments of her brother and her lady mother, were not always the most amicable in the world, proposed an adjournment to the saloon.

Captain Lyster, whom we have yet only slightly introduced to our readers, was the only son of Sir Charles and Lady Lyster; he was one year older than Mrs. Elphinstone, of whom he was extremely fond, and with whom he had been long on a visit. Peculiar circumstances in his life had tended considerably to change his character, and perhaps to improve it:—the gay, the elegant, the admired Herbert Lyster, was now the grave, the sombre, the almost misanthropic recluse of Elphinstone. In the calm of that beautiful place, and in the sympathy and affection of the indolent Fanny, he found all the alleviation to his sorrow, that is ever to be found from mere human aid; and as yet Herbert Lyster had sought none from a higher source. With a mind far better stored with intellectual treasure, than often falls to the lot of idle men of his rank in life, but without any of that mental regulation so necessary to direct even the most talented through the devious paths of the world; he was but ill prepared to encounter that shock, which, let casuists say what

they will, is the most difficult to endure, in the whole catalogue of ills to which our weak nature is liable, —a disappointment of the heart. Herbert Lyster had long known Catherine Heathcote, and had loved her nearly as long. Beautiful, amiable, and clever, she was well calculated to inspire a deep and lasting affection; nor was she insensible to the passion she had created in the breast of Herbert Lyster: what then were the obstacles opposed to their happiness? Alas! poor Catherine was not of the aristocracy, and this was a crime of such immense magnitude, in the eyes of Lady Lyster and her elder daughters, as to lead her to declare in unmeasured terms, that her son would, by persevering in his engagement with her, bring down the everlasting displeasure of his whole family; that the income he derived from his father would be instantly withdrawn, and all that could be alienated from him at his death, would infallibly be so alienated.

Sir Charles was one of those rare animals,—a hen-pecked husband,—in the fullest sense of the word he was so; not one of those prudent men who submit to the superior sense and discretion of their wives, nor one of those wise men who submit for the sake of a quiet house; he was literally afraid of his wife. He married her because his father desired him; and for a high-born and termagant wife gave up a mild and pretty girl, who, in her turn, married a man she did not love, and died soon after her marriage, leaving one infant girl to inherit her own delicate constitution, and, as it afterwards appeared, her hapless fate.

Catherine Heathcote, the child of this unhappy

mother, received from her harsh father, the unfeeling commands of Lady Lyster never more to presume to think of her son, on pain of bringing on his head ruin, —on her own disgrace. Her father enforced this command with paternal power, but without paternal affection. His daughter submitted. No entreaties on the part of her lover could induce her to see him, or to receive his letters; they met only once after the events I have detailed, and then in secret and in misery.

Herbert Lyster immediately left England, and some months afterwards, on looking at an English newspaper, read the marriage of his own sweet Catherine, his once pure and high-minded friend, to Sir John Trevor, a fox-hunting debauchee more than double her age, who had long been notorious for his admiration of female beauty, and the destruction of its innocence. The same paper contained the intelligence of Mr. Heathcote's succeeding to the "valuable living of Carlton, in the gift of Sir John Trevor." This was the second piece of preferment he had received as the price of his daughter's misery; the living attached to the valuable property of Lyster having become his, we presume, on the presentation of Lady Lyster, some months before. "Reproaches, not loud but deep" were freely lavished by the unhappy Herbert on fathers in general; and I almost fear, if the truth must be told, that mothers did not quite escape the anathema.

The blow of Catherine's marriage was doubly severe. He had recovered the pangs of separation, in the belief that she must be eventually his; for although Sir Charles was comparatively young and positively healthy, still he must eventually pay the

great debt, contracted alike by the great and the humble, the weak and the strong. Of Catherine's fidelity of heart he never doubted; he knew her father well enough to feel assured, that it was he who had sacrificed his sweet and innocent child to a vulgar and vicious libertine: he mourned bitterly her unhappy lot, and rather nursed than endeavoured to subdue his passion. Some months after this event Mrs. Elphinstone wrote him that Sir John Trevor had fitted up Carleton Park with considerable splendour for the reception of his bride; but that after a short stay there, it was decided by her physicians, that a residence in a warmer climate was necessary to the restoration of Lady Trevor's delicate health, and that as soon as fox-hunting was over for the season, the ill-matched pair were to proceed to Italy. The time of their return was uncertain; with the lady it was supposed to depend on her health,—with the gentleman, on the period fixed on for *hunting cubs*."

Fanny added, "We made a visit at Carleton soon after their arrival. The bride looked ill and unhappy; and whether it was the contrast, or that I was pre-disposed to hate him, I know not, but I never saw Sir John look so odious or so vulgar. He lounged about the satin sofas, and yawned very much as if he had had a 'capital day,' of which no one knows the fearful symptoms better than I do. His lovely wife looked wretchedly ill at ease, and absolutely started when he addressed her. They returned my visit, and afterwards dined here. I certainly never knew before that even the class of fox-hunters might be divided into two classes; for I am sure Elphinstone, whatever

he may be in a *red* coat, can never look like Sir John Trevor, and out of it is a gentleman."

Fearful of encountering the travellers, Herbert returned to England, and refusing to enter Lyster Park, took up his abode at Elphinstone.

"Fanny," said Mr. Elphinstone to his wife, as he entered her dressing-room before descending to dinner, "did you hear that Trevor had been here, *pour prendre congé*? He called before quitting this country for Italy, whither he is bound, in order to bring home his poor wife, who, by all accounts, is returning to die."

"The happiest lot that can await her, I imagine," replied Fanny, "situated as she is, poor girl! But I did not see Sir John, and I hope Herbert was equally fortunate."

"No, indeed; I regret to say he encountered him in the library; for even servants appear to have an instinctive feeling that the animal is not to be admitted into a room, particularly appropriated to ladies. Unfortunately your brother had selected that room for writing letters in to-day; he was annoyed, and is still miserably nervous on the occasion. Did you ever hear, or are you aware whether your governess is acquainted with Lady Trevor,—there was a letter for her with the foreign postmark."

"I never heard her mention Lady Trevor," said Mrs. Elphinstone, "but I think it not improbable; for Bowers Gifford, where Miss Walcot lived, is not a great way from the village where poor Catherine was born and brought up. I do think," added Fanny, as she and her husband walked down stairs together, "my mother is more irascible and unpleasant than ever."

"Not a bit," said Elphinstone; "for, saving your relationship, my dear Fan, she was always abominably disagreeable. I hope the Horton Beaumonts, and Lady Anne Dormer, will keep her in better order to day, if only for the sake of poor Sir Charles;—faith, Fanny, I am apt to think you rather provoking sometimes; but, if you were like your mother, I should have sent you off to the Jointure House long ago."

"Oh, Frederick!" said the lovely wife, "it is only when you hunt, and make a noise, and keep dinner waiting, that I am naughty; I really love you dearly, from April to October." As Elphinstone gazed on the beautiful creature beside him, he *almost* forswore fox-hunting; fortunately for him, however, the sound of a carriage was heard, and he was prevented making a vow so rash, that October would assuredly have seen it broken.

The arrival of the guests who were to form the dinner party at Elphinstone on this day, took place immediately; the dinner was announced in due time, and, whilst an affair so important as the eating a good dinner was going on, much the same conversation transpired as is usual on those occasions in great houses, at the particular season of the year on which these re-unions take place; for, I have always observed, that in August, the quantity of grouse is discussed; in September, the wildness or scarcity of the partridges; but never is the conversation so continued, so animating, as during those blissful months when fox-hunting is in season: then the length of the runs, the difficulty of the leaps, the fracture of the neck of a dear friend, form topics of never-failing

interest. The presence of the ladies forms no bar to these delightful ebullitions of real fox-hunters; for, now that the fashion of asking a lady to drink wine is exploded, a gentleman is really in his own eyes exempt from all attention to his fair neighbour. On the present occasion, all the subjects above alluded to were "out of season;" and nothing unseasonable, except the delicacies of the table, was authorized at Elphinstone.

The last drawing-room, the Craven meeting, the bow meetings (to come), and Sir John Trevor's departure for Italy, were all severally discussed; and I believe it will generally be found, that four subjects, as important as those above named, are as much as country ladies and gentlemen can manage during a dinner of three courses. The withdrawal of the ladies was the signal for those masonic signs of gladness, which never fail to mark the departure of the fairer parts of the creation; those indescribable signs, which every lady accustomed to even the *best society*, will remember to have *perceived* before the door of the dining-room was closed upon her exit.

The conversation of the saloon was about as erudite as that of the dining-room; the entrance of the little girls gave rise to the usual questions of, "how old are you?" "how do you like your new governess?" &c. with the never failing remark, that "Fanny and Isabella are excessively grown," although nothing of the growth alluded to may be visible; then the critiques on governesses follow.

Lady Lyster, just from town, amused her daughter's guests with accounts of the fashionable world, from which she had just emanated,—with the splendour of

her two titled daughters,—and with the distinguished part she herself had played, in scenes of folly and dissipation. Fanny, overcome by heat and fatigue, nestled herself very comfortably into the down cushions of her low blue sattin fauteuil, and left the entertainment of her guests to her loquacious mother. The gentlemen sauntered in one after another; the carriages were severally announced; and so terminated the “very pleasant dinner at Elphinstone.”

CHAPTER V.

WHATEVER was really the motive which induced Lady Lyster to pay an annual visit to Elphinstone, I have no means of knowing; but, judging by the result, it may with some degree of fairness be concluded, it was for the express purpose of finding fault with every thing, and every body; and of contrasting Mrs. Elphinstone's usually careless manner, with the strict adherence to all fashionable and heartless rules in her elder daughters. On her present visit, she appeared more than ever disposed to view the proceedings at Elphinstone with a jaundiced eye. The decided part the Elphinstones' had taken in the affair of Herbert Lyster, added to Fanny's defence of *her* governess, and abuse of Madame Gautier, called forth

a more than the wonted quantity of gall from the haughty and heartless mother.

On the morning after the dinner party, Lady Lyster having opened and read, not only her own, but her husband's letters, and, having descanted on the impropriety of her grandchildren walking out without green veils and parasols, seated herself in Mrs. Elphinstone's morning room, with just that sort of countenance and manner which leads those skilled in physiognomy, to foretell that every topic under heaven that can be started, will be met with ill-humour and contradiction. Mrs. Elphinstone, though not a disciple of Lavater, generally knew perfectly well all the signs in her mother's looks. The heat of the weather rendered her particularly indisposed to discussion or altercation: she recommenced the perusal of the Morning Post; this, however, was only deferring the evil; so, seeing her mother's good breeding induced her to be silent only as long as she appeared to be employed, she took up a little silk bag, on which she was embroidering a "forget-me-not," and resigned herself to her fate.

"Captain Lyster is decidedly more romantic and foolish than ever," said the kind mother.

"I do not see that," said Fanny quietly.

"Ah, no! of course you are bound not to observe his follies, having contributed so largely towards his indulgence of them." Fanny made no reply; and Lady Lyster, provoked, and rendered still more uncomfortably warm by her daughter's coolness, than by the heat of a mid-day's sun, resumed, "Yesterday, to absent himself from table merely because he had seen Sir John Trevor!—preposterous nonsense!—

and when, too, that sweet girl, Florence Beaumont, was of the party."

"Herbert does precisely as he pleases at Elphinstone," returned Fanny; "and as to Florence Beaumont being of the party, that I am sure would never influence him one way or the other,—disagreeable silly girl!"

"Upon my word, Mrs. Elphinstone, I lose all patience with you. Defend your brother's disgraceful conduct, and contradict me as much as you please, but for your own sake, for the sake of good taste, do not affect to undervalue that pretty creature,—a niece of the Duke of Derwent, and heiress to almost boundless wealth. You, and your brother, are certainly so unlike Lady Oakeley and Lady Frederick Howard, that I am sometimes disposed to doubt your relationship."

"Your Ladyship must best know, whether or not we are so happy as really to deserve the honour of relationship with Lady Oakeley and Lady Frederick Howard; but, at all events, you must admit you are fortunate in having two out of four of your children so every thing you can desire." This little sally of Mrs. Elphinstone's was uttered with that languid calmness of manner, so intolerably provoking to the angry disputant.

It certainly is a consolation, when (particularly in a very hot day,) we have worked ourselves into an intense heat, and what is worse, a very red face; it is, I say, a consolation to see the other party as red, and as hot as ourselves. No comfort of this kind, however, presented itself from the sweet placid countenance, and quiet manner of the really amiable Fanny.

She merely added, after a minute's pause, "Poor Herbert! he has already sacrificed his happiness to the love of rank and fortune. I hope he will make no more sacrifices."

Lady Lyster's inflamed countenance underwent no diminution of red, at Fanny's last remark, and her lips were opening to the further utterance of her maternal griefs, when a gentle tap at the door announced a visitor, and Miss Walcot made her appearance.

"I was not aware you were engaged," said she, addressing Mrs. Elphinstone; "I will, if you prefer it, come to you when you are alone."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Elphinstone, as composedly as if nothing had occurred, "I am not engaged, and can attend to you now; sit down. By the bye, you have not been introduced to Lady Lyster; allow me, ma'am, to name Miss Walcot to you. Miss Walcot, Lady Lyster."

The "governess" bowed quietly and gracefully to the great lady, and seated herself by the table at which Mrs. Elphinstone was working, or appearing to work at her embroidery; little progress, however, appeared to have been made in the "forget-me-not."

To pourtray Lady Lyster's rage at this consummation of her daughter's apostacy, is quite beyond my feeble power of description. To Miss Walcot's inclination of the head, she gave "no sign;" and on seeing that lady take her seat by Mrs. Elphinstone, she arose from hers, and commenced a rapid walk up and down the room. How far this tended to cool her I know not; it certainly failed

in annoying the presumptuous mortal for whom it was intended.

"This, then, is a list of books you wish to have for my little girls," said Fanny. "I will desire that it may be forwarded to Hookham without delay. How do you find your pupils in learning? are they dreadfully stupid and obstinate?"

"Oh neither one nor the other," said Miss Walcot, "they both begin to read, and Fanny has actually finished a little frock; and as an incentive to future industry, I have told her, that if you have no objection she shall herself give it to the poor child for whom it is intended; she is delighted with the idea. May I hope you will allow her?"

Had Fanny been inclined to adhere as strictly to the instructions of her mother as her sisters were, her extreme indolence of character would still have prevailed against them. In the present instance, owing to a former conversation with Miss Walcot, on the subject of her children being taught to throw off some of their haughty reserve to their inferiors, and perhaps at this moment particularly disgusted with haughtiness and rudeness, she gave a ready consent to her little girl herself disposing of her first essay in needle-work. This was too much for the already highly excited temper of Lady Lyster.

"Mrs. Elphinstone!" she exclaimed, in a voice almost inarticulate from passion, "do I hear right?—do I actually hear that the grand-daughters of Sir Charles and Lady Lyster are not only degraded into sempstresses, but are to be the bearers of their hideous pieces of workmanship to the squalid inmates of the miserable cottages in the neighbourhood? Is

it possible? — degenerate scions of a noble stock! and at the instigation too of a person living here as a governess — a hireling!”

Fanny, more shocked at her mother's very unlady-like manner of expressing herself, than at the illiberal matter contained in her invective, replied with some spirit :

“My daughters, ma'am, will be brought up as I please; and however their education may disgrace their maternal relatives, as the children of the son of the Earl of Malden, I will take especial care it shall be properly conducted.”

When Lady Lyster had nothing to say to a remark, she possessed the peculiarly happy art of not hearing it; she therefore went on,—“Such examples, too, as you have had,—such extraordinary advantages!”

“May I,” said Fanny, “ask what these extraordinary advantages are?”

“What are they?” said the angry lady; “look at your sisters; remember your own early education!”

“Not forgetting Madame Gautier,” replied Fanny, laughingly; “however, if you intend to remind me of my early advantages, or to point out my noble sister as my examples, I assure you, you will very ill serve the cause you think so essential to your grand-daughter's welfare; for myself, I can only assure your ladyship that I believe all my faults (and they are not few) as a wife and a mother, proceed from the extremely defective education I received; and for my sisters! I fervently hope my girls will never resemble them in any thing.”

“They certainly never will, if that person is to have the direction of their youth,” retorted Lady

Lyster: "she is but too interested in bringing them to a level with herself, not to succeed in her attempt to do so."

Gertrude had borne the first attack with patience. To this second most unprovoked one she replied, "I wish, madam, that the little girls now under my care may ever be brought to the level of what I think right; in that case, they will not disgrace the noble race to which, as daughters of Mrs. Elphinstone, they belong. No one more truly admires and respects the aristocracy of this country than I do; belonging to it as I do, both on my father's and my mother's side, and many of my dearest friends being amongst the most admirable of its members. Your ladyship forgets that high birth is not the only aristocracy to which it is desirable to belong; there is an aristocracy of good breeding, not always attendant on high birth."

"Spoken *en princesse*!" said Lady Lyster, sneeringly: "worthy of the present race of governesses; but I have done, Mrs. Elphinstone; educate your children as you please; let me be insulted by their governess! I have done,—bring up your daughters as you please!"

"I intend it," said Fanny, coolly, at the same time cutting the leaves of a book, she was thinking of reading.

Lady Lyster had recourse to the last resource of the angry; she closed the door of the elegant morning-room with violence, which made the china rattle, and caused Fanny to put her hands to her head. She exclaimed, somewhat in the manner of Shylock, not in his spirit, "Oh, my china! — oh, my mother!"

The "governess" shuddered almost as much at the indifference of the daughter, as at the unfeminine conduct of the mother.



CHAPTER VI.

LADY Lyster's stay with her degenerate daughter, always uncertain as to its duration, and ever productive of pain rather than pleasure, terminated this year sooner than usual, and left only a retrospect, that to minds properly constituted, would have been inexpressibly distressing. Among the inmates of Elphinstone, however, one only seemed to regard it with feelings in which pleasure had no share. Fanny was glad; for her mother had been unusually dissatisfied and violent, and was a sad interruption to her luxurious boudoir. Elphinstone had always availed himself of her annual visit to his house, to be particularly attentive to his duties in St. Stephen's Chapel; and on hearing his lady-mother had really taken her departure, delightedly returned to scenes more congenial to his nature, than those in which he was compelled to move in town.

I wonder how many amongst the number who compose our Lower House would not be puzzled to tell why they were placed there,—who could satisfactorily account for their intense anxiety to add M.P. to their

other titles? The spendthrift lord, (as on a recent occasion,) desires it as the only means by which he can return to the country from which he has been driven by his profligacy and his extravagance; the superlatively clever man seeks it as a means of displaying powers that might otherwise never be heard of; a Cressett Pelham may desire it to watch, as he firmly believes, over his country's safety; and there are, doubtless, some few actuated by other motives. But look at the case of the thorough-bred country gentleman. He is summoned from his beautiful place in the country to offer himself for some portion of his own or another county, or more probably for the country town near which he resides. At no season of the year can this summons arrive, that it does not disturb one or other of the seasonable occupations of the country gentleman. In early summer it interrupts the intellectual amusement of otter-hunting, or the races, to which he is probably steward. Then come August and grouse-shooting; partridges and September; and then the awful sacrifice of time, should the fiat come, between the months of October and April! One might be tempted to think love of country only could produce so mighty a sacrifice, but, depend upon it, it has nothing whatever to do with it. Then look at the case of the barrister, who, for the miserable gratification of bowing or bribing himself into parliament, not only spends a little fortune, but in a great measure gives up the splendid income that rewarded him for his talents and his industry. I could more easily account for his infatuation than for that of the country squire:—the last I look on as quite unaccountable. I have been led into this digression by

the results of a late general election, and, perhaps, by the recollection of a remark I heard made at that time by one of the race of country gentlemen I have just mentioned.

On coming down to breakfast the first morning after his return from the town, for the representation of which he had successfully striven—

“ I now,” said the deep politician, “ begin to understand something of the Reform Bill; and I must say it has done great good in curtailing the time allowed to begin and complete an election.”

And I believe that was just all he did know of the bill against which he had been most vociferous. Should this book ever be opened by any of those M.P.s who have given up their harmless country sports to give a vote, *selon les règles*, let them not for one moment suppose that I feel other than real respect for them, in their several and proper vocations. I have no objection even to a fox-hunter, provided he does not sleep away the evening, short as it is, which is allowed us after the protracted dinner; and in his characters of a good landlord, a kind master, and a warm and hospitable friend, I admire him; but as a politician, be he Whig or Tory, he may rely on it he has miserably mistaken his *metier*. All this applies to Elphinstone. Eton, and the aristocratic banks of the Isis, and the continental tour, to say nothing of his *entrée* into the best society, had not made him a man of talent; he had not been obliged to think, or reason, or to do anything particularly useful; and he had certainly not been a volunteer in the cause of intellectual pursuits. He inherited, from a long line of ancestors, his well-sounding name of Elphinstone,

and his toryism, and he would just as soon have thought of analysing the reasonableness and justice of the one as of the other. He returned to his lovely wife just in time to take his post as steward of the — races, and to condole with his constituents on recent events in the political world ; although, if we may tell the truth, he would have grieved far more sincerely over the destruction of a nest of pheasant's eggs, than over that of the most efficient ministry that ever sat within the walls of the House of Commons.

“ What are you reading, Lyster ? ” inquired Elphinstone, of his brother-in-law, whom he found stretched on a sofa in Fanny's dressing-room, more intent on some pamphlets than was usual with him.

“ Those pamphlets of Jenkins and Tomkins, with the one by Richards.”

“ Well, what do you think of them ?—the first are written by Brougham, are they not ? ”

“ So they say ; but as I see no reason he could have for perverting facts with which he must be well acquainted, I should rather imagine they are written by some one, who has never mixed at all in the set he so grossly condemns. Richards's answer is as bitter and ill-tempered as can well be, and has afforded him an admirable opportunity of abusing the ex-chancellor, whether he really believes him the author of the pamphlets or not.”

“ What do they say of us ? ” asked Fanny ; “ that we are stupid and silly ?—I begin to think we are both, if not something worse.”

“ The only instance,” replied Lyster, “ in which Messrs. Jenkins and Tomkins are tolerably correct is,

where they touch on the colloquial powers of the aristocracy. But I imagine that in almost all society, conversation, if such it may be called, is equally frivolous and unworthy of being remembered: the only time in my life I ever dwelt on what I had heard, was during the three days I passed in the plebeian atmosphere of Russell-square, with Annesley. We were at Eton and Oxford together, and I accepted an invitation to his house, with some misgivings as to enduring a visit of three days to a hard-working barrister and his wife; for, like all poor professional men, Annesley had married, of course a poor woman; and to my horror I heard it, his sister's governess."

"Well, and what sort of people did you find them?" asked Fanny.

"Why such as I had never seen before, and probably never shall see again. Annesley came to me in my dressing-room, (for he had returned late from Westminster,) he looked pale and intellectual, and as if his somewhat care-worn countenance were the effect of industry and study, rather than of unhappiness, although I must say I had always commiserated him, and lamented that so "good a fellow" should be condemned to the misery of reading and thinking, instead of killing time in the proper place, and living somehow or other upon the wretched allowance of a younger son.—He conducted me to his plain but handsome drawing-room, and introduced me to two very gentlemanly looking men, and a pretty girl, his sister, to whom I had scarcely made what Julia Annesley afterwards called my aristocratic bow, when a lovely young woman came into the circle we had formed round the fire. This was Annesley's wife, the cidevant

governess of his sister. I was prepared to see her pretty, and of course accomplished, but I had formed no idea (at least not in connexion with her,) of so much quiet elegance of manner, and such perfect ease in doing the honours of a dining table. To my surprise, she was led down stairs by one of the men I had been introduced to; he also was the son of a baronet, and one, too, of older creation than our honourable father, Fanny;—so I found, after all my scruples as to paying a visit in Russell Square, I was not the first in rank, though I fear the very lowest in intellect and acquirements. I heard subjects disputed of which I had never dreamed,—opinions started and proposed, of which I had never read or thought: there was, however, no pedantry or display,—all seemed natural and easy; and the women, too, though both extremely pretty, took their share of a conversation, in which there was nothing either of fashion or of scandal. I left Annesley's house with the full persuasion that he was the happiest of men, and his wife the sweetest woman I ever saw.—I wish you knew her, Fanny."

"I wish I did," replied the amiable sister; "you see, Herbert, a 'governess' may be a delightful woman."

"Yes, sometimes; but I must see a great many Mrs. Annesleys before I can tolerate them as a race."

"Oh, I do believe Miss Walcot's virtues and excellences would redeem a much more fallen race than the unhappy one of which we are speaking."

"Even though it include the convenient young lady who dressed Lady Lyster's hair during the illness of her waiting woman," said Captain Lyster, laughing:

"however, I admit, my dear Fanny, that Miss Walcot is a 'splendid specimen,' as the horticulturists say."

"She is every thing that is delightful," said Mrs. Elphinstone, warmly; "and she has taught me more of the duties of a wife and a mother than I ever knew before."

"And when are they to be put in practice, my little wife?" said Elphinstone, putting his arm round the waist of the delicate being who sat beside him: "when I leave off fox-hunting, and cease to contest the representation of ——?"

"No, not when you leave off all I dislike, for then I should have no exercise for my virtues; but you shall see, when October comes, and you make a noise before it is light, and detain dinner till nearly bedtime, how well I have profited by Miss Walcot's precepts. And as to my children, I remember ever to have felt intensely anxious as to their appearance, and now I am equally so as to their mental acquirements and their conduct."

"I thought there was some change in the 'Upper House,' when I saw Isabella coming out of Brooke's cottage last night without any attendant, and carrying a basket nearly as big as herself," said the admiring husband. "When shall you begin to reform me, my Fanny?"

"Oh, I am so far from good myself yet;—but go to school to Miss Walcot, and you must soon improve. Of this be assured, my love, that if I am ever a reasonable being,—a good wife or mother,—and oh! if, more than all, I am in *deed* and in *spirit*, a Christian, it is to Gertrude Walcot I shall be indebted for a reform of far more importance than the one so lately

effected in the political world, and about which we were all (without knowing why) so absurdly anxious."

"Why, Fanny," said Elphinstone, gazing at the countenance of his beautiful wife, now beaming with an animation it too often wanted, "you electrify me, and have even startled Herbert from his propriety: he has had his eyes wide open for some seconds."

"At least," said Captain Lyster, "you will admit Miss Walcot must be a wonderful person; she has animated my darling little Fanny into making a long speech; rendered your capricious children very bearable, and awed our lady-mother into tolerably good behaviour in her presence. I must certainly know this pattern of a governess, and become wise too." He did know her, and he did "become wise."

CHAPTER VII.

THE sweet season of summer had passed away, and had been spent at Elphinstone, as it generally is passed by great people, when they have the taste and the good sense to prefer their own splendid homes to the horrors and idleness of a fashionable bathing or watering place. The ladies exchange visits with their neighbours, attend the provincial races, and the race ball, preside at an archery meeting, or perhaps even win a bracelet; see their children often, and occasion-

ally visit the cottages of the poor. The gentlemen ! aye, what do the gentlemen ?—Why, the respectable part of them, emancipated from parliamentary duties, return into the country just in time to quit it for the mountains of Wales, or the moors of the North, and return thence just in time to commit slaughter amongst the partridges. Oh ! those epochs in the life of country gentlemen, the 12th of August, and the first days of September and October ! what should we do without ye ? How furnish — not game, — but conversation for the dinner tables ! — Politics could never supply the erudite conversation of sportsmen, for, in reality, the thorough-bred country gentleman hates politics, as soon as his own election is over, that is, his own, or that of the candidate he approves, for one particular place or portion of his county. — I verily believe, that were shooting and hunting prohibited for one season, he would be condemned to the unheard of task of thinking.—Fancy the lucubrations of an unemployed country gentleman !

Mrs. Elphinstone had never thought her house so commodious, her park and gardens so beautiful, or her children so entertaining, as during the lovely month of August and September. She had done her duty as lady patroness of two balls, held the plate at an infirmity sermon at the church at S——, and had done the honours of Elphinstone to the Earl and Countess of Malden, and her sister-in-law, the young Duchess of Belton ; but all this had occupied only a very short space of time, and a much longer had been passed in the society of her sweet children, and their governess. The latter had acquired, imperceptibly, an influence over the mother and her pupils, which a

very superior woman ever does, and ever must acquire over an inferior mind, provided there be a predisposition to the reception of good seed.

One evening, as Mrs. Elphinstone was returning from a visit of charity, accompanied by her children, Miss Walcot, and a proper number of nursery maids and footmen,—for Fanny had not quite learned to do without these tiresome adjuncts to a country walk,—a travelling carriage-and-four, with male and female attendants, came slowly towards the gate of the park, by which they were walking; the windows of the carriage were closed, and darkened by the silk blinds within; the party was evidently expected, as the park gates were instantly thrown open for its admission, and no doubt remained in the mind of Mrs. Elphinstone, that the hapless mistress of Carleton had returned from the sweet but inefficient South to die in her own northern climate. The accounts of Lady Trevor, had for some time past been such, as to convey no hope of her recovery; but a wish so often felt by invalids to die at home, had induced poor Catherine to endeavour to reach a country which contained little, indeed, she might now dare to think on, but which, with all she had suffered in it, was still her own.

“Poor Lady Trevor!” said Fanny, “I wish she had not returned to England; it will so wretchedly unsettle Herbert;—you know Lady Trevor, Miss Walcot, do you not?”

“I do know her very well, but latterly she has not written to me; she has, I imagine, been too ill for the exertion of writing.—I will visit her to-morrow,—perhaps she may not object to see me.”

"Pray see her," replied Mrs. Elphinstone; "but let me entreat you to be cautious not to mention her name before Captain Lyster;—we never mention her. Poor Herbert! he has a great deal too much feeling for his own happiness."

"Not to be able to bear the mention of another man's wife, hardly merits the name of feeling," said Gertrude Walcot.

"Surely, under the peculiar circumstances of my brother and Catherine Heathcote, you would not call it by a harsher name."

"Indeed I would," said the inflexible 'governess.' "Catherine Heathcote is now Lady Trevor, and as such, lost, dead to Captain Lyster for ever. To flinch at the sound of her name, is at least a morbid sensibility which does an infinity of harm in the world."

It was getting late, and the children and servants were sent home by a nearer way to the house, whilst the two ladies sauntered on through one of the beautiful paths which led through the park.

"I can hardly understand," said Fanny, "how Herbert's conduct, admitting it to be what you term it, can do much harm in the world, or how he and Catherine, having resolved only to think of each other, can be of importance to any but themselves."

"Do you then suppose, my dear madam, that Lady Trevor has made a better wife because she has chosen to think only of her former lover? has she been a better mistress to her servants,—to the poor in her immediate sphere?—has she been a kinder benefactress,—and, above all, has she had the precepts of our beautiful religion ever before her?—has she not forgotten them and herself?—No; be assured,

dearest Mrs. Elphinstone, the woman who is not true to herself, must be false to all ;—to her God,—to her husband, —to her children, if she have them.”

“ Well, but admitting it were possible ever to have been a good wife to that horrid man, and allowing that Lady Trevor has neglected all her duties, as you say, my brother had no odious wife to please,—no duties to perform ;— he was at least amenable to no one.”

“ Pardon me, dear madam, for widely differing from you. Every man, in every station, has duties to perform ; every man is amenable to others, generally to many others ; and, in the rank in which Captain Lyster moves, we may at least hope to find good example.”

“ I submit, as I constantly do, to what you say ; but I must think poor Herbert dreadfully to be pitied.”

“ It is very natural you should feel for him, as his sister, and not having accustomed yourself to reason on these subjects ; but I earnestly hope, and firmly believe the time will come, when to a sister's pity you will add a sister's admonition. You are so much loved by Captain Lyster, the voice of reproof from you would do much.”

“ Poor, dear Herbert ! then you really do not pity his unhappiness, or commiserate its increase, in the melancholy event before us.”

“ I pity every body who misapplies fine sense and talents as he misapplies them ; but for what he has so pertinaciously fostered, I confess I feel no sympathy.”

“ You are very severe ;—too good for this wicked

world, dear Miss Walcot; I never can hope to come up to your standard of excellence."

"You are so near it now, that you have only to be true to yourself, to be as eminent for virtue and goodness, as you are for beauty and amiability; but in order to be true to yourself, dear lady," said the charming monitress, "you must study in what that truth consists."

"And I shall find it in the little book you gave me some time since?"

"In every page of it." Tears pure and heavenly fell on the pale fair cheek of the christian Gertrude, as she gazed on the exquisite creature beside her; and with heavenly eagerness she looked forward to the time when the interior would be also lovely,—when the mind of this fair creature should have opened to the glorious but simple truths of the gospel.

The subject of their late conversation now appeared in search of the ladies; and the lateness of the hour, the beauty of the scenery as witnessed by moonlight, with a wonder of whether Mr. Elphinstone would return home that night, brought them to the door of the saloon. Fanny urged her friend with so much earnestness to take coffee with her, that Gertrude, though considerably depressed by the sad insignia of her dying friend, and her subsequent conversation with Mrs. Elphinstone, complied.—It was almost the first time Captain Lyster had ever been in a room with Gertrude Walcot for more than a minute or two: he had sometimes met her in her walks with her pupils; seen her in the family seat at church; and after satisfying himself she did not look at all like Madame Gautier, the only governess he remembered to have

seen, he thought no more of her. It is true he had once or twice remarked that Fanny was more lively, and his nieces less noisy: but he was too much absorbed in his own cares to think much, if at all, of the source of these improvements; he therefore almost started, when the entrance of lights showed him the striking figure of the "governess." She had taken off her walking bonnet, and her hair, moistened by the damp of the evening, was so put back, as to display fully that noble and intellectual looking countenance, on which it was necessary to gaze, and to think, before pronouncing it beautiful. His first feeling was that of surprise and admiration; his next, if it were possible, to create an interest in the mind that must belong to such a face. Herbert Lyster was passionately fond of music; Gertrude played and sang songs in accordance with her own feelings, as people generally do. Her auditor, (for Fanny had taken up the last volume of a book it was necessary to finish that night,)—her auditor was enchanted, wondered at her beauty, her simplicity of manner, and lamented she should be a "governess," even Fanny's governess; and on the entrance of the waiting-maid at the given hour, when the ladies withdrew, he sat up long, thinking deeply,—whether of the fair musician, I cannot say; but certain it is, it was long since he had thought so little of Lady Trevor, or of himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

“YOUR letter, my dear Lady Mary, did surprise me, but it was only for a moment. How few there are, whose constancy can stand the test of time and circumstances. Do you remember those few words of Madame de Stael? (I think)—‘Oh, Temps! divinité terrible, ce n’est pas ta faux cruelle qui m’épouvante. Je ne crains que tes hideux enfans,—l’indifférence et l’oubli.’—I have the vanity to think that, in the case we are now alluding to, I am rather an object of forgetfulness than of indifference, and that were I to be thrown again into the society of your friend, his former regard for me would revive. In the first place, however, there is, I trust, no chance of our meeting, and if there were, and (all the obstacles to our union being removed) he offered me, without reserve, a share of his fortune and his title, I should most unhesitatingly decline to accept it. My poor mother, *malgré* her quiet reserve, knew a great deal of the world, and the few words of comparative authority she ever uttered, are become almost axioms with me. ‘Never,’ I have heard her say, ‘take back a discarded servant or a lover, both will presume on your good nature, particularly the latter.’ However, I am deciding on a line of conduct I may never be called on to pursue, for there has been ample time for Spencer Beresford, or rather for his lordship, to have renewed

his offer to me, had he ever intended it. I think, too, I know enough of him to believe that Gertrude Walcott of the present day, would appear a far different personage than the one he remembers so much the fashion. I cannot account to you, dear Lady Mary, for my preference of a man I felt to be my inferior in talent and acquirement; it was not that I hoped to assume more than a fair share of a wife's authority, for even were that my taste, which indeed it is not, I have long known, that of all creatures, the most difficult to manage is a fool; not that I think Spencer deserves that epithet,—far, very far from it; but he has mixed so little with clever people, his amusements are so completely those which require the exercise of no one talent, that whatever of cleverness he may have been blessed with, is certainly, as yet, hidden in a napkin. Then he admires clever women so much,—and we should have travelled, and have left all his associates; but it is useless talking of what we should have done,—we shall never do it now. You say he is ignorant of my residence here;—let him remain so.

“ Mrs. Elphinstone and I have long broken the ice of our reserve, and are warm friends. She is indeed a fascinating creature, and will, I fondly believe, one day be as good as she is lovely. Her indolence of temper, whilst it has often prevented an error, keeps back her progress in some degree. She is too idle to attempt to conquer at once the prejudices of a whole life, short as it has yet been, and which are kept up by the necessary intercourse she maintains with ignorant and frivolous people. The visit of Lady Lyster was indeed productive of much disquiet to us all; but I could not see her depart without a sense of pity,

which, in all cases, is akin to a kindly feeling. The Countess of Oakeley and her family are daily expected. She is represented as the prototype of her mother.

“ Poor Lady Trevor, whom you have seen at my father’s, as Catherine Heathcote, is returned to die. She has been many months in Italy, endeavouring to subdue a disease, not to be conquered in any country. She is at Sir John’s seat, close to Elphinstone. I see her almost daily ; but she is a sad example of the want of early principles : without ever meditating a bad action, I really believe her incapable of a good one, if accompanied with the slightest sacrifice of her inclination. Her husband is tolerably attentive ; but he pays dearly for his selfish conduct to her :— she makes no attempt to conceal her dislike to him, and, I grieve to say, I fear she is infatuated enough not only to think of, but to receive letters from her early lover. She is too ill to write to him or to see him, but she is weak and foolish, and dreads my visit, for she knows I suspect her of having heard from Captain Lyster, and fears my reproaches. Poor child of error and misfortune !—I have little inclination to embitter her passage to her early grave ; and equally hard, I fear, will be the task to attempt to soothe it. — My letter is unconscionably long.

“ Ever, dear Lady Mary, affectionately yours,
GERTRUDE WALCOT.”

This letter to Gertrude’s early friend, the Lady Mary Poyntz, gives a correct view of her feelings relative to Spencer Beresford. In her own heart, she had ever, with the fidelity so peculiar to a woman, en-

deavoured to make a thousand excuses for his conduct to herself; and a belief, almost unacknowledged, had never deserted her, that he would one day renew those vows he had it now within his "easy reach" to fulfil. But when she found the obstacles to their marriage, which had existed, were all removed by the death of the relative, whose title and fortune he inherited, and that yet he came not, wrote not, but was represented to her as paying very obvious attentions to a beautiful girl in his own neighbourhood; she, with all her sex's hastiness of decision, expressed herself as we have just seen. She was right:—had her former lover been again in her society, he would, —he must have felt for her all his early preference. But Gertrude, once convinced, or even suspicious of his conduct, had that entire command over her own heart, her sense of what was due to herself was so powerful, that nothing on earth would have tempted her to listen to any after concessions. There certainly is, paradoxical as it may appear, in some of the finest characters of both sexes, a considerable degree of obstinacy. My readers will, I dare say, be inclined to dispute this assertion; but they have only to take a review of their acquaintance, and they will find it invariably the case, that the most admired amongst it are those in whom there is a great share of this failing. It is mis-called firmness, because the other parts of the character are just what they should be; as we call the hair of those we love auburn, although in another it would be decidedly red. Obstinacy was certainly the besetting sin of my heroine.

In spite of the fear that it would be a "hard task" to soften or soothe the last hours of the dying Lady Trevor, the task *was* attempted. Gertrude saw her daily, and in her own good time, and in her own judicious manner, introduced conversation more suited to the occasion, than the querulous repinings that had so often met her ear. The result of her pious labour will be detailed in the proper place ; at present, turn we to more important personages.

Two travelling carriages, containing luggage, servants, children, and a "governess," had been emptied of their contents at one of the inferior entrances to Elphinstone, without the slightest intimation of their arrival having been made to Mrs. Elphinstone, when, late in the afternoon, an *avant-courier* announced the advent of the magnificent Countess of Oakeley ; and a splendid equipage drawn by four fine horses, and conducted by two postilions, whose liveries announced the noble house to which they had the honour to belong, soon appeared in sight, and presently stopped at the grand entrance to the house. Mr. Elphinstone, whose own simple and unaffected nature was never quite unawed by the imposing appearance and manners of his sister-in-law, was in immediate attendance to conduct her to the morning-room of his wife. Captain Lyster stood on the steps, looking very unconcerned at an event which caused no small bustle even in the orthodox establishment of Elphinstone. He held out two fingers to the countess as she passed him, who, touching them with one of hers, said coolly, "Ah ! Captain Lyster, are you here ? I had almost forgotten your existence." A look of ineffable contempt followed her as she passed on through

the entrance-hall. The meeting of the sisters was not very much more cordial than the one just described. Fanny heard with surprise that her ladyship's suite had preceded her some hours, and were actually already established on the side of the house allotted to them.

"I must desire my little relatives may be brought to me," she said, ringing her bell as she spoke; "it is long since I saw the girls, and my nephew, you know, has yet to be introduced to me."

"Lord Harrington is worth seeing, I believe," said the affectionate mother; "the girls are wretchedly shy, and not at all handsome; but I have not seen much of them lately. A governess certainly is a great comfort to rid one of one's children."

Fanny was spared a reply, by the entrance of the poor little objects of a mother's pride and affection. The girls were, as they had been described, "wretchedly shy." They glanced at Lady Oakeley timidly for a moment, but from time to time looked at the beautifully mild countenance of their aunt, as she caressed them, and endeavoured to obtain answers to her questions. The vaunted heir of the noble house of Oakeley, was a fine handsome boy of twelve months old, who was as yet certainly not tinctured with his sisters' shyness. He had already seized some of the blooming exotics that were placed in gay profusion about the tables of the boudoir; his lady mother took no notice of his destructive amusement, and his finely dressed nurse was either equally unwilling or afraid to correct her charge.

Captain Lyster sauntered into the room, and with some difficulty unclasped the tenacious little hands of

his nephew from a delicate vase of ground glass which he had with considerable adroitness lifted from its resting-place on Fanny's work-table. The roar of the angry lordling was hushed in the arms of his mother, and he was dismissed to his nursery, bearing off, as a reward for his cruel privation, the costly chain and repeater of the countess; the nurse, at the same time, receiving an imperious command he should not again be brought into that room. Lady Oakeley looked very angry, and her angry feelings were not lessened by Captain Lyster's exclamation of "What an ill-tempered little cub that is! I hope, Fanny, his apartments are as much to the eastern end of this place, as mine are to the west: that cry of his would awaken the seven sleepers." Fanny laughed, and directed his attention from the offending baby, to his little nieces, the Ladies Adelaide and Constance, who by their extremely quiet conduct, were more likely to win his regard.

Mrs. Elphinstone had seen her sister properly installed in her dressing-room, when she returned to her boudoir, accompanied by her own fair children, and found the little creatures she had left there timidly gazing at Captain Lyster, who had thrown himself into a bergère, taking no more notice of his companions, than if they had not been present.

"Ah, Herbert!" exclaimed his sister, "I hoped you would have grown acquainted with the poor children; I am sure they are very good and quiet; but come hither, my loves, and shake hands with your cousins. You must learn to be very good friends, and walk and play together."

"We never walk with any one but Miss Mason,

ma'am," said the elder child, "and we don't know how to play."

"Not know how to play!" said Fanny, "then your cousins shall teach you; and when Miss Walcot thinks it a proper time for walking, she will take you all out together."

"Without Miss Mason?" said Lady Constance, in a tone of surprise; "and will she let us go?"

"I will go to her and ask her," said the kind-hearted Fanny. "Miss Mason is, I suppose, your governess?"

"Yes," said the children both at once; "have my cousins a governess?"

"They have a lady living with them as a friend,—as their very best friend; they have almost forgotten the meaning of the word 'governess.'"

"And do you love your little girls?" asked the poor neglected child of the Earl and Countess of Oakeley.

Fanny's heart melted at the question; it told a sad tale of fashionable life. She evaded it, however, by telling the children they should introduce her to Miss Mason, and that she would obtain permission for them to pass the remainder of the evening in their cousins' apartments. They proceeded to the sitting-room appropriated to the governess of the titled children; a forbidding looking woman of five-and-thirty, very ill dressed, arose at their entrance, and discontinued the occupation of needle-work.

"I am come," said Mrs. Elphinstone, "to request my little nieces may pass the next two hours with their cousins; they shall be returned safely into your hands before their bed time."

The children's countenances, which had resumed

all their timidity in the formidable presence of their governess, brightened with delight as, led by Fanny and Isabella Elphinstone, they followed their aunt to the rooms which belonged exclusively to the *friend* they had heard of.

“My dear Miss Walcot, I bring you two little girls in addition to your own:—allow them to pass the remainder of the evening together; and if you can show any attention to Miss Mason, I wish you would, although,” she added, lowering her voice; “she is not a person, I am sure, that you can admit to your society. But I must hasten to dress; it is very late. Remember, I expect to find you in the saloon; and, to-morrow, I trust you will do us the favour of joining us there before dinner.”

A gentle tap at the door was followed by the entrance of Herbert Lyster. They looked at each other for a moment in mutual surprise. No blush, however, tinged the pale cheek of the “governess:” all there was fair, pure, and unembarrassed.



CHAPTER IX.

THE party this day assembled at the dinner table at Elphinstone, was a small one only, consisting of three or four bachelor fox-hunters, living in the immediate

vicinity, and Sir Frederick and Lady Lorimer, who were passing a few days there, from their seat in Cheshire, on their way to the intellectual neighbourhood of Melton, whither her ladyship, young, idle, and without children, persisted in accompanying her husband every season, thereby adding to his expenses, detracting from his pleasures, and being herself far less comfortable than she might have been in her own house, and all this to act up to her maxim, that a husband has no right to any pleasure without his wife; and, as she said, to show her own conjugal affection. The fact is, she was one of that numerous class of ladies, who like any place better than home, and who certainly think the duty of a wife consists in following her husband about like his shadow, when he is at home, and in allowing him to go no where from home, whither she too goes not. Lady Lorimer aimed at a great deal; she was by turns a fashionist, a devotee, and it was whispered she was not without pretensions as a literary lady; she was lively, talented, and very good humoured; doted on rank and fashion, but was withal one of the most selfish beings in existence: her love for her husband was selfish, incapable of personal sacrifice. He, dear man, hugged his chains, and really believed he did like to have her in Leicestershire, or in a wretched inn in Wales, during the broiling heat of the first fortnight of grouse shooting; and had begun to think it not very hard to give up a pleasant dinner, because she was omitted in the invitation. Then he was, to be sure, not very wise, and was fifteen years older than his wife. The consequence of all this was, their visiting list was

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considerably shortened, and it was a common expression in the neighbourhood where they resided, in making up a dinner party, "Oh! — we are sure of the Lorimers." A visit to Elphinstone was the beau-ideal of all that was delightful to Lady Lorimer; and the Elphinstones were so kind, they invariably returned a most courteous assent to the proposition, made once or twice a year, of the honour of paying them a visit in their way into Leicestershire, or at the sessions in January, when Lady Lorimer had more than once been made supremely happy by walking into the ball-room at —, in the train of the Honourable Mrs. Elphinstone.

My readers may perhaps wonder why I have devoted so many lines to such a character as I have just portrayed in the person of Lady Lorimer; not because she plays any prominent part in my book, but simply because I wish to point out the different rocks on which women (particularly wives) are apt to split, in this country. I say in this country, because I believe there is no other in which there are to be found so many fond, so many faithful, and, I grieve to write it, so many bad wives. Lady Lorimer was a bad tiresome wife, on the plea of being a most devoted one; but in fact because she had a mind miserably ill regulated. She pronounced her plan of "managing a husband," the best plan in the world, not having either candour enough, or sense enough to see that she succeeded in carrying her point, or, as she termed it, "managing her husband," not because the poor man liked the rod he kissed, but simply because he did like peace and quiet. But
vare, ye Lady Lorimers! these lovers of peace and

quiet, these managed husbands are the very men to abuse their liberty, if once they get it. I would rather trust the man who roves where he will, and when he will, fearless alike of his wife and her frowns, than one of those cooped-up men, who, like the canary, if once his cage door be opened, flies off in the full enjoyment, and in the full abuse of the liberty of which he has been so long deprived. A man is a tyrant from his very birth ; he tyrannizes over his nurse, his sisters, his younger play-mates, his mistress, and eventually over his wife ; and wise is that woman, who submits with a good grace to what in almost every instance is inevitable. There are, I believe, very few men, who may not, by a good wife, be made a comparatively good husband.—The three ladies who on this evening graced the dinner-table at Elphinstone, sat somewhat later there than the established order of a dinner-party, composed of gentlemen of the chase, usually admitted ; but Lady Oakeley and Lady Lorimer equally disliked the society of ladies, and that long period which, even in this age of refinement, and in the very best society, ever intervenes in the country, between the exit of the ladies from the dining room, and the appearance of the gentlemen in the saloon.

Poor Fanny had for some time been wearied with the heated and impure air of the room. Her sister's stories of that fashionable world, she had now ceased to think of, and Lady Lorimer's relation of archery meetings, where she had obtained some prizes, and in the detail of which she had an opportunity of introducing several times the name of the Marchioness of W — , who, as lady patroness of the meeting

and as distributor of the trinkets, certainly had spoken to her delighted ladyship.

On their entrance into the saloon they found Gertrude Walcot, who was immediately named to the two ladies as the particular friend of Mrs. Elphinstone. For a moment the haughty countess gazed with astonishment at the *distinguée* looking person who was presented to her: it was, however, the only notice she deigned to bestow on her. Lady Lorimer's real good nature, and her admiration of every thing done by people of rank, contested strongly in her breast. She remembered, however, it would be better to be civil to the "particular friend" of the honourable Mrs. Elphinstone, than to offer any offence in a quarter where so much was to be gained; and having for a few seconds balanced between civility and insolence, self-interest led her to decide on receiving Miss Walcot very graciously, particularly as she found her only chance for talking was to talk to the "governess;"—Lady Oakeley having placed herself on a sofa, in a manner to preclude all conversation with her, and the really exhausted lady of the house with difficulty keeping open those beautiful eyes, which, for so long a period, had closed regularly at the sober hour of eleven.

Miss Walcot found Lady Oakeley's beauty quite equal to all she had heard of it: far more striking than Mrs. Elphinstone, she was infinitely less pleasing; her features of faultless regularity wanted every charming expression; there was neither intellect nor amiability in them,—all was clear and cold; like her mother she was a compound of selfishness and hauteur, devoted to the world, and

ts miserable vanities; and the tale sometimes told her by her only monitor, her glass,—that even beauty like hers, was not proof against dissipation, and evil passions,—was the most bitter one she could have learnt. She had ever looked with contempt on her youngest sister, and the accounts she had received of her from Lady Lyster had quite confirmed her in her early belief that she was a fool, and not far removed from a methodist,—a term her ladyship applied to every one who was known to say, or even suspected of saying, their prayers. When, however, to this astounding fact relative to her sister, was added another, that she enforced, as much as possible this duty on those around her, by having prayers read regularly by Miss Walcot to her children and servants, the matter was conclusive. Fanny was pronounced to be under the dominion of an artful woman, which, from her extreme weakness of character, was by no means surprising; and of course too contemptible a person to raise any wish on the part of her family to keep up more than a distant and periodical intercourse with her. Lady Lyster stormed when she talked of her; her eldest sister declared it was just what she expected; and the Lady Frederick Howard (whom I have not yet introduced to my readers) was extremely desirous to see how Fanny would look and behave in the new character allotted her by her affectionate relatives; and as she was very tired of the exclusive St. Leonard's, she determined to pay a visit to Elphinstone, to see if Fanny “were really a methodist.”

Lady Lorimer talked away to her patient auditor, and was too self-satisfied to notice the irrepressible

smile that for a moment appeared on the countenance of the "governess," as she listened to accounts of that world of fashion in which she had played a far more busy and a more important part than her titled narrator. Captain Lyster entered early, and without speaking a word to the voluble Lady Lorimer, sat with his eyes intently fixed on the noble countenance of Gertrude. The other guests strolled in one by one, as dull and sleepy as they generally are after the delights of a "capital day:" they had just sense enough remaining to stare at Gertrude Walcot with their heavy wandering eyes, and taste enough to listen to her as she sung, at Mr. Elphinstone's request, some pretty simple songs, which were better suited to his ear than those more difficult, and more sublime ones, in which she so much excelled. Lady Oakeley had withdrawn in disgust from a scene where she saw herself little noticed, and began to think that not only Fanny and her brother, but Elphinstone and his guests were alike fools and madmen. Lady Lorimer too, who disliked every thing in which she took no part, uttered her adieux to Mrs. Elphinstone, and sought her room, after giving a look, he well understood, to her drowsy rubicund-faced spouse.

Fanny and her friend followed the example of the visitors, and left the room together; they sought the sleeping-rooms of the children. It had for some time past been one of their mother's chief pleasures to bless them as they slept; and as she sat to-night between the couches on which rested her sleeping, blooming girls, she wondered whether her sister had paid a similar visit to her nursery,—“But why,” she said, “should I expect she has done so?—she has no

friend to point out to her the exquisite pleasure of watching and kissing her children, or to teach her to offer up the silent prayer for these precious but fragile blessings. How many years of happiness I myself lost!—how many years in which I saw these darlings for the last time, (until another day which we might never see,) just before I left my dressing-room for dinner!—All this I owe to you,” she said, pressing the hand of her friend, as she spoke.

“And to your own gentle nature, your own really excellent heart,” replied Gertrude, “you owe much, much more.”

“To say nothing of my dear, good husband,” said the happy Fanny, “I do not believe I loved him half so dearly till I knew you.”

“It was from a higher source, my dearest madam, you learned all these duties: I did but dare to point the way; I was fixed on as the humble instrument only.—But let us not converse to-night, you are tired.”

“We will just peep at the boys, then,” said Fanny, smiling through tears of pensive pleasure; “and I will take as much rest as I can, to enable me to go through the unusual fatigue of dinner parties, and the Countess of Oakeley.

CHAPTER X.

THE second Miss Lyster had married, early, the youngest son of the Duke of Belgrave; and had her mind been tolerably well stored, or had her heart been capable of admitting into its recesses more than one object, she might have been happy, and respectable, as the wife of Lord Frederick Howard. But she was too true a disciple of her mother, to constitute the happiness of any being on earth; she was as selfish as her elder sister, and far sillier, — as fond of the world, and not half so well fitted to shine in it; but she was a better tempered woman, and cared nothing at all for what enraged the Countess of Oakeley. She thought little of her children, — less of her husband: was exquisitely delicate and pretty in her person, of which she was vain to a degree; she was very idle, — never even reading the trash of the day; she neither liked walking nor riding, music nor dancing; she liked a great deal of company, because she was admired, and the excitement of society took her from herself; and yet, of all the world, she loved herself only. Lord Frederick was seduced by her beauty into making her his wife; and had she proved even tolerably good, would have been an amiable and a domestic man; as it was, he was disgusted with her frivolity, and her total neglect of her two little girls. They therefore rarely met: she visited a

fashionable watering place when the London season was over, and he was generally to be seen at Newmarket, Goodwood, and at those numerous resorts where respectable and happy husbands are not often seen without their wives.

The children of this ill-assorted pair were mere babies; but they were already consigned to the care of a "governess," sent by Lady Lyster, with the assurance of her being very good-natured and very accommodating, and her salary only twenty pounds per annum: she was, moreover, the daughter of her favourite waiting-woman, and had been educated at a *very nice* school at Hackney, for the express purpose of going out as a "governess." To this well-born, well-educated young lady, then, were the daughters of Lord and Lady Frederick Howard given up. On her first arrival at Sedley Park, after having made herself, as she said, "presentable," she was taken to Lady Frederick. Her ladyship saw she was very pretty, and very nicely dressed, and doubted not she would do very well for Julia and Ellen, as she really looked extremely good-natured.

The poor girl entered on the duties of her office, which appeared to her to consist in showing her pupils their letters, taking them out walking, and telling them stories of most improbable events, to which, however, their baby-ears listened greedily, and their memories, unpractised as they were, failed not to retain; and when (these important duties over) the poor little "governess" found herself alone in her sitting-room, what did she?—Did she endeavour to improve herself by reading, or practising at the piano, or by any study which might have raised her beyond

her present situation?—No; she knew enough to educate the daughters of Lady Frederick Howard, and to gain her a sum, small as it was, which furnished her with clothes; with this she was satisfied:—no sense or feeling of the moral responsibility attached to an instructress of youth was felt by her; she had never been taught to feel this. Educated herself at one of those miserable third-rate schools, which infest the neighbourhood of London, she believed she fulfilled her duty by teaching her pupils whatever they were capable of learning in the way of lessons; and, as their mother thought so too, we must not too harshly condemn this unworthy specimen of that part of the creation whose cause I am endeavouring to advocate: for, as in the case of theft, if there were no receivers there would be no thieves, so, if there were no bad and careless mothers, there would be no improper governesses:—that class, equally unfit for the study and the kitchen, would be extinct; and in its place we should have, perhaps, better servants, or at any rate, a class of girls contented to stay at home, and perform the several duties home never fails to afford. But the great benefit to be derived from this would be, that the scarcity of really valuable and well-educated governesses would enhance their value; they would be treated not only with consideration and kindness, but with that perfect respect, to which, beyond any member of a family, they are entitled, and which can alone gain them that feeling of affectionate confidence from their pupils, without which the labours of the governess will ever be in vain.

I will resume this point of my argument in a future chapter.—I must now return for one moment

to the little, smart, ill-educated being, who forms one of the most numerous class of governesses in the present day. Her mind unstored with any resource to which to turn, when not actually employed with her pupils, she naturally enough sought society from the nurse and upper house-maid. Mademoiselle Victorine, Lady Frederick's maid, would scarcely have condescended to notice her, had not her attendance on her lady taken her from her vicinity almost as soon as she arrived at Sedley; and it might have been well for the poor girl, had she had no other alternative from ennui than the amusing histories of the nursery. Lord Frederick returned for the shooting season, and found, as his lady had done before him, that the "governess" was really "very pretty and very good-natured."

A few days after the arrival of Lady Oakeley and her suite at Elphinstone, she drove out with her sister to return some morning visits; and Gertrude, having dismissed her pupils and the youthful ladies, Adelaide and Constance, to a walk in the park, entered Mrs. Elphinstone's boudoir, for the purpose of continuing a miniature she had begun from a full-length portrait of her friend, and which had been removed from the saloon, in order to allow her more opportunity of pursuing, uninterruptedly, her delightful art. She was surprised to find the room occupied:—on a sofa lay a lovely young woman, attired in a travelling costume of most exquisite fashion; she was endeavouring to dissipate the ennui of her loneliness, by looking over some of Finden's sweet portraits.

She started up on the entrance of Gertrude, and without the slightest hesitation exclaimed,—“Ah!

I am very glad you are come in: they told me Miss Walcot was at home.—I suppose you are Miss Walcot.”

Gertrude bowed assent, and the stranger continued.

“Mrs. Elphinstone and the Countess, I find, are out; I am tired to death of being alone; I hope you can stay.—How provoking they should be out, just when I arrived!”

To this extraordinary address Gertrude replied, by saying—“She should be happy to remain, and requested to know if it were to Lady Frederick Howard she was speaking?”

“Yes; did not Mrs. Stacey tell you I was come?—She knows my hours of being alone: I wanted her to stay and talk to me; but the old creature said something about duties, and a large dinner party.—I suppose she, and you, and all here are methodists. Lady Lyster said there never was so strange a set of people.”

Gertrude could scarcely repress a smile; but she answered, “The word methodist is so differently and so unmeaningly applied, that I cannot tell if Mrs. Stacey or any of us be methodists, according to your ladyship’s interpretation of the word; but she is very good in her station, and I believe does strictly perform the duties she talked of, or at least hinted at.”

“Pray,” said Lady Frederick, “do you know Miss Smith?”

Gertrude looked inquiringly,—“Oh! she is governess to my children. I thought, most likely, all governesses knew each other, although,” continued the loquacious little simpleton, “you certainly do not look the least like one. I dare say you are aware

you are no favourite of Lady Lyster's: indeed, she says you have entirely spoiled every one here."

"I am sorry to labour under the displeasure of any member of Mrs. Elphinstone's family, but I cannot understand what is meant by the word spoiled—applied, as I now hear it, to a household which is, generally speaking, so good and amiable as Mrs. Elphinstone's."

"Ah!" said the dutiful daughter, "I don't attend much to any thing mamma says; I wish she would be contented to rule papa, and make him miserable, without interfering with her daughters. Do you know, she said I was unworthy to be sister to the Countess of Oakeley, simply because I went to the play one night; and some one told her I laughed at some of Keeley's drolleries: she says, the aristocracy never laugh.—By the way, what do you think of my grand sister?—Is she not magnificent?"

"She is certainly very handsome."

"Yes; and you could add, very disagreeable."

The sound of carriage wheels, announcing the return of the ladies, prevented the necessity of a reply on the part of Gertrude, which must have compromised either her honesty or her politeness: she thought she had never seen any one so pretty, or so absolutely silly, as this third specimen of Lady Lyster's and Madame Gautier's system of education.

The meeting between the sisters was a very cool one; two of them caring only for themselves, and the third feeling how little similarity there had ever been between her and them, and that now that little subsisted no longer. On the pride, the selfishness, and the worldliness of her elder sister, she looked with con-

tempt; and when she saw her unmindful alike of her husband and her children, she remembered with mingled feelings of shame and gratitude, that but for the timely intervention of her admirable friend, she too must have become a bad and careless wife,—a still worse mother. Though far removed from a clever woman, she had good sense enough to feel and lament the errors of her defective education, and materially to correct them; and she had, too, sense enough to feel disgusted at the frivolity of her younger sister, and to perceive a degree of levity in her manners, an impropriety in her dress, she had never previously observed. Fanny's heart was purity itself, and she shuddered when her husband replied to her observations on her sister, that most likely she would recriminate on Lord Frederick.

“Do you then,” said the alarmed Fanny, “mean to insinuate, that he is really so very bad a man? and, oh! still more, can you really believe Julia could ever be so very, very wicked?”

“I do mean, that Howard is a profligate husband, and I do believe his wife capable of becoming a degraded, lost woman, cold and passionless as she is; she is so egregiously vain and foolish, that she would readily become the prey of any man who thought her beautiful person worth the trouble of appropriating to himself. Is she not always surrounded by people young and silly as herself; fluttering at those sinks of iniquity, the fashionable watering places of this country; never with her husband, with not even love enough for her poor children, to prevent her disgracing them?”

“And with no sense or feeling of religion, I fear,”

timidly ejaculated Fanny, "and without that, her love for her husband and her children, would avail her little."

"Well, my own Fanny, I trust you have all these virtues to preserve you to me. I think I need not even fear Lord de Lisle when he comes!"

"Oh, do not jest on such a fearful subject," said the wife; pressing her lips on the clear and open brow of her husband, "but is Lord de Lisle coming? and is he a very charming personage?"

"Yes, I have a letter this morning from Brighton, in which he writes me, he shall arrive to-day to dinner. As to his being charming, I must leave you to judge for yourself; all I can tell you is, that without brilliant talents himself, the cleverest women are said to have preferred him; and with a person, to say the least of it, very extraordinary, the most beautiful have loved him."

"What can make him so fascinating, I wonder," said Fanny laughing. "I have heard he is too, a terrible flirt, but he will find it difficult to exercise that talent to-day; for, I believe, with the exception of Miss Walcot, we are a party of married dames."

"Perhaps he may not think that an objection," said Elphinstone, laughing. A beautiful group of children now came into the library in search of Fanny, to request she would entreat Miss Mason to allow the little girls, her pupils, to pass the evening with them, instead of with her and Madame D'Albret, the countess's waiting-woman, who, after the duties of her ladyship's toilet, was always to be found in Miss Mason's sitting-room.

"Surely, mamma, it cannot be right my cousins

should sit with servants," said the youthful Isabella, indignantly.

"No, not right; certainly," rejoined her mother, "but let us go to Miss Walcot, and hear if this statement be correct."

"Oh, yes! mamma, it is true," returned the child. "To-day Madame D'Albret has been there all the morning, and Miss Mason has been helping her to put ribbons on one of Lady Oakeley's dresses."

Mrs. Elphinstone found it was even as her children had stated: she determined to remonstrate with her sister on the following day; but finding she was late, she merely made it her own particular request, the cousins should not be separated until bed-time; and hastened to her dressing room for the purpose of making her toilet. Here she was soon joined by Gertrude, already dressed for the party she now generally joined; for, some time past, a young lady well known to her had been at Elphinstone for the purpose of being constantly with the children, and thus relieving Miss Walcot from that incessant watchfulness she had so faithfully exercised, although she continued the entire direction and superintendence of their education.

"Oh, you are dressed!" said Fanny, "I must be very late. But you have been at Carleton,—tell me of poor Catherine, how is she?"

"I believe rapidly sinking," said Gertrude; "indeed, I found her so much worse, I detained the carriage a very long time: her mind, however, is more composed, and in a far better state. I have written three lines to Captain Lyster to inform him of her precise situation. I have taken the letter to Mr.

Elphinstone, who franks it for me, and who is now adding a postscript."

A message to say Mr. and Mrs. Charlton (two of the expected guests) were in the saloon, obliged Fanny to hasten, and Miss Walcot deferred her recital of what had passed at Carleton, until a more convenient season. Fanny, all grace and loveliness, took the arm of her friend, and they descended together to the saloon. Gertrude, dressed with somewhat more than usual care, looked exquisitely handsome. The saloon was already graced by the presence of the great and the gay of both sexes; but the magnet of attraction was Lord de Lisle. He was named to Fanny only in time to conduct her to the dining-room, and before she could look at the wondrous personage, who, without charms of either mind or person, contrived to engage all hearts; and before she could observe the effect of his presence on the "governess."

CHAPTER XI.

ON the right hand of the lady of the house, sat Lord Oakeley, who had arrived the previous day; and on her left, Lord de Lisle. If the astonishment which existed in her mind had been depicted on her countenance, it must have been observed by at least the

object who caused it. She could scarcely believe it was really the admired, courted, fashionable Lord de Lisle, who was placed beside her: he was immensely tall, and very stout; his hair was very light, his eyes were very clear and bright, and his teeth white and even: there was at first something abrupt in his manners, but he was assiduously attentive and devoted to his fair neighbour, and before she left the dining-room, Fanny wondered less, at all she had previously heard of his lordship's great good fortune in being so universal a favourite with the clever and the lovely of her own sex. He was evidently struck with the beauty of Lady Frederick Howard, now gaily talking with Colonel Charlton, and expressed his admiration to Fanny.

"My sister is certainly very lovely," said Mrs. Elphinstone, "but we are all terribly fastidious here, on the score of beauty; Miss Walcot is so superior to any we ever see, that she really makes us difficult to be pleased. Do you know her?" she said, looking towards the bottom of the table, where, unless the party were a very formal one, she was always to be seen on the left hand of Mr. Elphinstone. Lord de Lisle followed the direction of Fanny's eyes, and saw the "governess." She was pale, and calm, and grave as usual; and her former lover, with all his boasted philosophy, would have given something to have even looked as calm as she both felt and looked; but Gertrude, in her obscurity, had that which his lordship possessed not:—the consciousness that she had broken no faith,—that no heart had ached through her means,—and if her pulse had throbbed more quickly at a meeting so unexpected, it was the result of sur-

prise only; it lasted but for a moment:—all now without was loveliness and dignity,—all within rectitude and peace.”

“Do you know Miss Walcot?” asked Fanny, in some surprise at his lordship’s look of embarrassment.

“I never heard her mention you.”

“I formerly knew a great deal of Miss Walcot, both at her own home and at Lady Jane Spencer’s.—Is she a friend of yours? I thought she had . . .” His lordship hesitated.—“You have, perhaps, heard, that her father’s death, by depriving her mother and herself of fortune, obliged her to enter the world in the situation of a governess!

“This was the case; she came to me in that character:—but she has been every thing to me,—sister, friend, adviser. There is no woman on earth I love so well, and no man I am so disposed to hate, as the cold-hearted, selfish being, who won her affection,—to whom she was affianced, and who, when weary of their engagement, coolly dissolved it:—however, but for his selfish faithlessness, I might not have known her; I am, therefore, rather less uncharitably disposed towards him than I otherwise should be. Did you, or do you know Spencer Beresford?”

Lord Oakeley, on hearing this question of the unfashionable Fanny, laughingly advised her to read Debrett; adding, “you will there see that Spencer Beresford and Lord de Lisle are one and the same.—You have not been talking treason, I trust, Mrs. Elphinstone?”

Lord de Lisle had been sitting on any thing but rose leaves for some minutes; and poor Fanny, conscious of her blunder, covered her confusion by a

precipitate retreat to the saloon. There her first impulse was to withdraw with her friend, and to have commiserated her on her unfortunate meeting with her former lover; but, whatever country ladies (resident a hundred and sixty miles from the metropolis, and rarely visiting it) may think, very little ease has found its way into their confined and well-bred circles; and, although Lady Oakeley had, without ceremony, retired to her own room, and remained there until informed by Madame D'Albret of the fact of the gentlemen being in the saloon, Fauny was compelled to remain, and pay all proper attention to her guests.

Mrs. Charlton, a stiff and very proud country lady, exacted in her own person more devotion than would have been required by a party of three hundred fashionables in Belgrave-square: she looked infinitely shocked at seeing Lady Frederick Howard quietly and very coolly composing herself to sleep on a sofa, having requested Gertrude to play her "something pretty" on the harp; a request with which she complied, with that singularly happy temper which often led her (though invariably the most talented person in the room) to contribute to the amusement of those least capable of amusing themselves.

Two other ladies of the neighbourhood were seated at some distance from the rest of the party, commenting in a low tone on the extremely odd circumstance of Mrs. Elphinstone's introducing her children's governess to her dinner parties;—"as if," said Lady Hanway, "the fact of her being a *lady* by birth had any thing to do with the matter:—she is a *governess*

now, and as such her proper place is the school-room. Do you know," she continued, "the other morning, Lady Lucy Graham and I were in Smith and Palmer's, when Mrs. Elphinstone came in, and she actually introduced her to us? Lady Lucy, I believe, did bow; —I took not the slightest notice."

"Oh, no, of course not;" said Mrs. Onslow; "it is really quite shocking, this levelling system; and I assure you, General Onslow says he should not be surprised, if, in the event of another election for —, Mr. Elphinstone is thrown out; for it is more than suspected he is inclining to the other party:— he is as bad as Mrs. Elphinstone; for, on the day of the Infirmary Sermon, he handed Miss Walcot into the carriage before Miss Beaumont, who had gone to church with them."

"Is it possible?" said the shocked Lady Hanway; "he cannot expect to be brought into parliament again through the influence of the aristocracy, if he does such things as those."

A long conversation of this nature was continued between these haughty ladies, who did more to lower and degrade the class, whose honour they were so anxious to uphold, than could have been done by the introduction of a hundred governesses; in fact, it is these little great people who do so much harm to real indisputable rank and fashion. Mark the case just cited by Lady Hanway: she, the wife of a mere baronet, and the daughter of a retired Liverpool merchant, refused to acknowledge an introduction, which Lady Lucy Graham, the daughter of a Duke, the wife of a man of very high rank, and connected in every way with the most influential Tories in this

kingdom, kindly, and without hesitation, noticed.— I love rank ; I have no great objection to fashion ; but I do hate and despise the *pretenders* to rank and fashion. In my intercourse with the world, (and it has not been a slight one,) I have, from people from whom I am immeasurably removed by birth, station, and fortune, met with the most courteous and kind consideration ; whilst I have been rudely and unfeelingly treated, by those who (in every respect, save fortune, and that place in society procured by fortune) are infinitely my inferiors. Ask Gertrude Walcot,—ask numerous others in her situation of life, by whom they have been most painfully made to *feel* that situation ;—they will tell you, one and all, not by the high-born man of fashion, in whose society they are occasionally thrown, but by some poor and idle younger brother and his sister, or by any one of the ladies and gentlemen who fear to risk their own slender pretensions, by civility to those whom they fancy beneath them.

Mrs. Charlton had engrossed Fanny's whole attention by a recital of her journey to a certain classical town, where she had been, at the request of her younger son, to be present at a series of gay doings, performed in honour of the inauguration of one of our most worthy and most respected noblemen into an office of importance. She wondered Mrs. Elphinstone had not gone ; she wondered every body had not gone ;—so much rank and fashion, such delightful *dejeuners* ;—but, indeed, Mrs. Charlton began to fear Mrs. Elphinstone never meant to go out again.—“You have, I think, quite given up London ?” she inquired.

"Unless compelled by circumstances, I certainly shall not visit London again, for a long, long time," was the reply.

"Which circumstances, I understand, are very likely to occur," rejoined Mrs. Charlton; "for I hear Lord Lexmore is never likely to recover; and, as the Earl of Malden is old and infirm, you will, most probably, soon be Countess of Malden, in which case you cannot seclude yourself as you have done lately."

"I hope it will be long before I am drawn from my happy quiet, by the two events you allude to;—at least, it will then be time enough for me to decide on my mode of life. I confess I am too happy here to sigh for change."

"Yes, perhaps so; but, my dear Mrs. Elphinstone, we owe something to society,—to our station in it;—in short...."

"Ah!" said Fanny, laughing, "there are so many disposed to uphold the rights of society, and to bend to the slavery of station and fashion, that I feel myself quite exempted,—particularly when I look at my sister, the Countess of Oakeley: you will allow she is fashionist enough to pay the debts of her whole family, were all as great defaulters as I and my brother, Captain Lyster."

"*Apropos* of Captain Lyster," said Mrs. Charlton, "where is he now? I understood he was at Elphinstone."

"He left us only three days since;—he is now on a visit to the Duke of Belton. His movements are always uncertain; but I think it probable he may go abroad again."

"May I ask," said the inquisitive country lady, "if there be any truth in the report, of his engagement with Miss Beaumont? Lady Lyster rather hinted at such a thing as likely to take place, when I had the honour of meeting here."

"She rather hinted at her own wishes, I imagine," said Fanny, "than at her son's intentions: Miss Beaumont is the very last person in the world likely to attract him."

"How is poor Lady Trevor?" asked the wily interrogator. "Is there no chance of her recovery?"

"I believe, none," said Fanny; "but Miss Walcot, who passed some time with her ladyship to-day, can give you the latest information: she has been too ill since her return for me to see her."

Mrs. Charlton looked very grand, at the mention of her appealing to the "governess" for information, and remained satisfied, without hearing farther of poor Lady Trevor.

Miss Walcot had quitted her station at the harp, on perceiving her "something pretty" had had the desired effect of lulling Lady Frederick to sleep; and, with a mind rather less tranquil than usual, had sought her little charges, and had consigned them with her nightly blessing to their beds. The neglected daughters of Lord Oakeley were beginning to feel the want of that tenderness and care they saw so liberally bestowed on their cousins, and to wonder no longer that a kiss or a smile from the "governess" was the greatest of all incentives to their good conduct. They had no "incentives,"—threats, uttered profusely, alone met their ears; and they had, alas! no tender, anxious mother, to whom to confide their infant

sorrows. Miss Mason was the ignorant tyrant of her real domain, the school-room;—her pupils were looked on as the ills necessary to her situation in life, as spies on her conduct, and that of her only associate, the waiting-woman: she was recommended by Lady Lyster and Madame Gautier as “accommodating, low-born, and cheap.”

On Gertrude’s return to the saloon, she found the whole party now assembled. Lord de Lisle was seated on a sofa by the side of Lady Frederick, who was listening with the most smiling complacency to some complimentary remark of his lordship, uttered in a low tone, and with a haste almost bordering on *gaucherie*;—to all but the immediate object of his attention his manner was singularly strange; but to the happy lady who engrossed him, he was mild, devoted, and fascinating. Such he had been to Gertrude Walcot, and it required all her resolution, all her firmness; nay, it required more than these, to enable her to think, without regret, that such things were, and would be no more. It may be asked, what more could be necessary to prevent the return of an attachment, as deep as it may be supposed such a woman capable of feeling? Is not the resolution of a woman,—is not her firmness (which I have already described in my heroine as meriting the name of obstinacy) sufficient to eradicate for ever a passion she believes to be no longer returned? No; one feeling only can do this,—the certainty that she has been ill-treated. Gertrude had this feeling, this certainty; she knew that she had been made the sport of Beresford’s selfish vanity in the first instance, and afterwards of his caprice; and how did her lordly ad-

miserer feel, on thus meeting, after a separation of two years, the woman he at least thought he had once loved, and whom he knew he had treated unjustifiably, even to his easy conscience? He felt as men usually do feel on these occasions, very awkward at first, and then very indifferent: he certainly thought he never saw any one so perfectly beautiful as Gertrude, even more so than when he had last seen her;—then she was suffering from that worst of maladies, an uneasy mind, produced by doubts of his affection;—now, she was comparatively calm and happy; suspense had long since become certainty; her own mind was decided, let what might be the result of his accession of fortune.

A request that she would sing, met Gertrude almost on her entrance, and on her proceeding to the instrument for the purpose of complying, Lord de Lisle immediately and hastily arose from his seat and exclaimed, “Ah! I remember, Miss Walcot, you did sing a great deal. What shall it be?” he continued, turning over the leaves of some music Mrs. Elphinstone had placed near the instrument. Gertrude seated herself, and sung with exquisite taste and pathos, that most touching of all airs, “What, tho’ I trace each herb and flower;” even Mrs. Charlton, on her return home, allowed, in answer to her son, Colonel Charlton’s rapturous admiration of her beauty, that the young woman certainly did sing very sweetly. After a little music and very little conversation, the carriages were announced, and the guests, who were not staying in the house, departed for their respective homes.

CHAPTER XII.

"I REALLY cannot see half so much impropriety in my arrangements for my children, as in your persisting in introducing your governess to all your visitors," retorted Lady Oakeley angrily, in reply to Mrs. Elphinstone's remonstrance relative to Miss Mason, and the little neglected girls, her nieces. "Nothing," she continued, "can be so absurd, so ill-judged, and I am persuaded so repugnant, to the proper feelings of those people of rank and fashion who visit here."

"Very possibly," said Fanny, quietly, "I am not recommending my line of conduct to your ladyship's imitation; I am only anxious that a fit person should be selected to repair to your poor girls, as much as it ever can be repaired, your total neglect of them; even our wretched mode of bringing up, never condemned us to the society of servants."

"You really speak with considerable freedom of what you are pleased to call my neglect of my children; I remember not very long since you rarely saw your girls," remarked the angry countess.

"I do, indeed," said Fanny, "remember a great deal in my conduct, both as a wife and a mother, which I now deeply regret; but I believe I may safely affirm, that no morning of my life passed without my having all my children about me whilst I

was dressing; and when not too late in the evening, they were invariably the companions of my dressing-room; but even had not that been the case, I was indefatigable in my search for a lady whose talents and virtues might supply the deficiencies in myself, of which I am so conscious,—those dreadful effects of my miserable education.”

“ You speak of our bringing up in a manner somewhat undutiful, to say the least of it; but I think I may also add very uncalled-for; much time and care were exhausted on our education: Madame Gautier was eleven years in the house as our governess.”

“ Very true,” said Fanny, “ and delightful specimens we are of the time and care, and the eleven years of Madame Gautier’s superintendence! We have, however, answered the end, I suppose, for which we were educated: we have all married men of rank and fortune;—that we are weak, vain, and unamiable, is a very secondary consideration in the school in which we were brought up.”

“ It were well you answered for yourself, Mrs. Elphinstone, without including Lady Frederick Howard and myself in your sweeping assertions,” said the enraged and astonished Lady Oakeley, to whose ears the voice of truth and sincerity (heard for the first time) sounded harshly.

“ No, Augusta, it were not well I omitted to include you and Julia, in what I know to be correct;—fashionable and dissipated I knew you were, but I cannot see you so utterly careless of your first and greatest duty, and not tell you of it. I cannot see our sister adding palpable and fearful levity to folly

and vanity, and not at least endeavour to point out to her, the precipice she is even now at the very brink of."

"Would you, then, have me nurse and educate my children myself?" asked the countess, somewhat softened by the earnestness of her sister's manner; "or become what you decidedly must be, a methodist?"

"No, I would have you do neither of these things; you may love and watch over your children, and still be a woman of fashion. Look at Lady Lucy Graham. Is she not young, beautiful, and one of the gayest women in town? and is she not, at the same time, one of the best of wives and mothers? Do not her children love and admire her? does not her husband love and respect her? With regard to the term methodist, would we were both more entitled to bear that name, in its real and legitimate signification! I fear we are yet far from it."

"Indeed, I hope so; if to deserve it be to give up all the pleasures of the world, and to be placed under the dominion and guidance of an artful and interested woman."

"I am not under the dominion or guidance of any person," mildly replied Fanny; "but I do with deep humility hope, and indeed feel, I am now under a guidance which that admirable woman, whom you miscall 'artful,' has been the first to point out to me, as the only safe one for our conduct, in a world so beset with temptations as that in which we live."

"I can have no objection then, to your following this or any other guidance you may think proper; only leave me to my own, if you please."

"I have done," said Fanny; "only remember,

Augusta, when you see your daughters, all your matured reason will condemn, you were warned of the fatal consequences of your neglect and your example. I have spoken in tenderness only ; in sorrow rather than in anger. You forgive me, Augusta?" she continued, extending her hand to her sister. Lady Oakeley slightly touched it, and the subject was never more renewed between the sisters.

"Why, what is the matter?" said Lady Frederick Howard, sauntering into the library through the conservatory, which connected it with the drawing-room. "Augusta, you look very angry; and you, Fanny, very grave, and rather sad; do tell me, is Lord Oakeley going to be domestic and live at home, or has Miss Walcot been scolding? However," said the little lady, "you need not answer; I want to know if you have seen Lord de Lisle? he promised to come and drive me out in the pony phaeton."

"And you really believe he intended to keep his promise?" was the contemptuous reply of Lady Oakeley; "why, you must be sillier than even Mrs. Elphinstone gives you credit for, if you think Lord de Lisle would leave a partridge or a pheasant for the best woman in the world; I am sure your own husband would not."

"Oh, no; nobody expects or wishes it of a husband," said Lady Frederick; "but Lord de Lisle is not my husband, and I certainly did suppose he would keep his word. I wish," she continued, pouting as she spoke, "he would not say what he does not mean; I could have ridden out with Charles Spencer."

"And is there nothing else will content you, Julia?"

asked Fanny, "besides driving or riding with two gentlemen you have scarcely ever seen?"

"No, nothing, just now. It is very dull here until dinner, and you never dine till near bed-time."

"It is true we do dine late; but surely you might find something to prevent your dying of ennui: carriages, horses, books, music, pictures, and — but stay, here comes a cure for ennui; seven reasons against being idle," said Fanny, throwing open as she spoke, a window, at which appeared her own four lovely children, and their three cousins;—"do they not look sweet and healthy?"

"Yes, yours do; but I cannot say much for Augusta's girls; they always look frightened to death, and the boy is as cross and rude as a little hyæna."

It is well his lady-mother had left the room; she would never have forgiven this libel on her son. "But now tell me, my children, where you have been."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed the two girls, "we have been to the South Lodge, and what do you think we have seen there? Susan has a little baby, only one day old, not bigger than our dolls, much,—and the nurse says the clothes we made it, fit very nicely,—and, mamma, may we ask Mrs. Stacey to send Susan some nice things?"

"You may tell Mrs. Stacey that Susan has a little baby, and then she will send what is proper for her," returned their mother. "Where is Miss Walcot?" she added. She was told that Miss Walcot had been summoned to Lady Trevor, and had begged to have the carriage sent for her at nine o'clock.

The listless Lady Frederick was condemned to a dull morning within doors, and to believe that man might

prefer partridges to pretty women. The sportsmen continued their amusement till they could no longer see to pursue it, and returned home in time to dress for dinner. The party this day consisted of the guests staying in the house, and two or three of the neighbouring families. Dinner was commenced, and Gertrude was immediately missed by Mr. Elphinstone, who, generally obliged to conduct some one else to the dining-room, never failed to observe whether she was properly attended to. He inquired, when seated at table, why Miss Walcot was not present, and learnt from his wife, she had gone on a visit to her sick friend, Lady Trevor, and had not ordered the carriage until nine o'clock.

"Is her presence quite indispensable to a dinner party at Elphinstone?" asked Lady Oakeley.

"Not perhaps absolutely indispensable," returned Mr. Elphinstone; "but every man, I believe, likes to collect as much grace and beauty round his table as he possibly can, and I know no one so handsome or so graceful as our friend Miss Walcot."

"She is a very fine woman," said Lord James Sedley; "I remember her two or three years since visiting at Lady Jane Spencer's, and much admired. Why, my lord," he said, turning to de Lisle, "was not Miss Walcot a great favourite of yours in those days? I fancy I remember some scenes there;—am I wrong?"

"My lord," however, was too busy with some very well dressed fish to attend to those calls on his memory, and Lord James soon finding all recollections of Miss Walcot's beauty, and her scenes with Spencer Beresford, fading away before the excellen-

cies provided by the *cuisinier Français* of Elphinstone, the subject, and indeed all other subjects were banished for the present, save those that bore particularly in the occupation in which all were more or less engaged. Lord de Lisle appeared more at ease than he did on the day before, but he talked less, and was either (Lady Frederick remarked) very stupid or very sleepy. He contrived to make his peace with her for the omission of that morning, by promising that on the next he would himself drive her to the spot where the hounds were to meet, provided her ladyship would be ready to set out at the early hour of half-past ten. For hounds, like time and the tide, wait for no man, still less for women,—and this being the case, it was most likely that the pretty Julia would not see the hounds and the red coats; but at all events, she could not pass a duller day than the one that was fast becoming night. She had risen at noon, breakfasted at two, sauntered about in her cloak and bonnet till it was quite dark, then rested from her fatigues until it was time to dress for dinner. She descended to the drawing-room to flirt and talk nonsense with any one who would flirt and talk with her; and after an hour or two thus spent, she sought her bed to sleep till the commencement of another day (of one of her days), which was only to be frittered away like the preceding; and of this mis-spent time, and of these precious hours, she was one day to give an account!

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh, Julia!" said Elphinstone to his sister-in-law, as they met in the hall the next morning, "I have had a letter from Howard; he slept at — last night, and comes on here directly after breakfast. Had you not better give up de Lisle and the hounds to-day, and be at home to receive him?"

"Preposterous! Why, my dear brother, you cannot be serious, surely! I have not seen Lord Frederick for more than three months; I do not believe he knows I am here. What is he coming for?"

"To see you, I supposed; but now you remind me of it, I do not think he does mention you."

"No, I dare say. I shall certainly not give up my drive to see him a few hours sooner. I deserve some pleasure for getting up at ten o'clock."

The affectionate wife was conducted to the carriage by Elphinstone. Lord de Lisle was already seated, with the reins in his hand, looking like any thing but a man of gallantry, and as if he repented the promise he had made the preceding evening. A man is very foolish to make a promise to a pretty, or indeed, to any woman, after dinner, particularly after drinking champagne. Nothing opens a man's heart so easily as that sparkling, dangerous beverage;—how many promises have been made under its influence!—how many broken, or at least repented of, on the

morrow's waking! I once knew a gentleman who told his friends never to believe any thing he said when he had been drinking Trinity audit-ale. Those who have ever been on the classical banks of the Cam, have probably tasted this nectarious beverage, and will scarcely wonder at my friend's caution; to those who have not visited the said classic spot, and who, consequently, have not drunk at this dangerous fount, it will be impossible to impart any idea of its excellence.

Whatever his lordship might feel on the occasion of having to wait on a damp December morning for a lady, whilst the hounds, and hunters, alas! showed no such complacency for him, we know not; he whistled away his angry feelings, if he had any, and conversed gaily with his lively companion. Elphinstone soon passed them with the cheering intelligence that they were too late, and that he only hoped to fall in with them by taking some leaps, impracticable for his lordship, I think, he said, laughing, and putting spurs to his horse as he spoke: "You'll remember going out hunting with fair ladies; the weather is excellent, we shall have capital sport."

"Then we shall not see any thing after all?" said Lady Frederick; "well, never mind, I shall like just as well to go to — and drive about the streets; and I am sure you will make the people stare, for you are the strangest figure perched up there with your red coat."

Now Lord de Lisle liked to be reckoned a strange figure, and he liked pretty women; so he bore his disappointment extremely well, and even the sight of his groom bringing back his horses did not materially

discompose him; indeed, nothing ever did. He drove his pretty companion to —, and (as she foretold he would) made the people stare, and made them talk too, for the town of — had more than its due share of curiosity and observation; and no person (however unimportant he or she might be) could hope to escape the remarks of the idle loungers, who always appeared in greater numbers in the market-place at —, than in any other town of similar insignificance; a visit to the chattering little hair-dresser, or the fact of eating a bun at the principal confectioner's, afforded ample conversation, during the period of dining, to the young gentlemen, whose sole business appeared to, and, I suppose, did consist in, watching the movements of the different visitors to their county town. It will then readily be believed, that the sight of a well-appointed carriage, of which the arms, liveries, and occupants were alike unknown, standing in the street whilst the servants procured different refreshments for the lady, was an event of no common nature, and far too interesting to be overlooked or soon forgotten: indeed, Lady Frederick was entitled to the thanks of the inhabitants, for the conversation she so amply afforded them.—Who could they be? Where were they staying?—Not at the Charlton's,—nor at Lord B.'s,—and not at General Onslow's; for they must have heard of them at either of those places.

Finding it impossible to gain any elucidation of the mysterious fact of strangers having entered — for more than the mere purpose of changing horses, it was decided that Mr. Peter Compton should watch the servants in strange liveries, who would doubtless

go to the post-office; and so, with a little help from the post-master, the mystery might be explained on the following day.

The unknown occupants of the carriage having done all they could do in the way of driving and eating, prepared to return to Elphinstone. They passed the principal hotel, at the door of which stood a travelling carriage, to which fresh horses were being attached. Lady Frederick, ever on the watch to see any thing, or any body, who might for one moment amuse her vacant mind, looked very closely into the carriage, and was disappointed at seeing in it only her husband:—a nod of cool indifference from the gentleman was as coolly returned by the lady; and, on Lord de Lisle asking who it was she bowed to, she replied, with perfect non-chalance, "Oh, only Lord Frederick!"

"Do you mean Lord Frederick Howard?" asked her companion, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes; no other."

"Would you not, then, like to continue your drive with him," said de Lisle, pulling up the horses as he spoke.

"No, no; for pity's sake drive on:—the idea of wishing to be shut up in a carriage with one's husband!—it is a proof you are not married," she added, laughing.

"And it is almost enough to make me forswear matrimony," said his lordship, "lest my wife should have the same honour of being shut up with me, that you have just expressed in your own case."

"Well, you may rely upon it she will, then. I know no one, but my primitive sister, Fanny, who

rides with her husband when it can be avoided; and she, you know, is in leading strings to Miss Walcot."

"And is that one of Miss Walcot's maxims?" asked de Lisle, with a feeling of deeper interest than he chose to make manifest.

"Yes; so I suppose, at least; for, as my sister, Mrs. Elphinstone, never does, says, or thinks any thing not previously submitted to Miss Walcot, I conclude she has derived all her new-born conjugal virtues from her. Why, I remember once being there in the hunting season, for a few days, and Mrs. Elphinstone did nothing but inveigh against fox-hunters, and pouted a whole evening if her husband kept dinner waiting; and now,—would you believe it! she always makes his breakfast, delays dinner for him to the latest possible moment, (starving every one else,) and has a paper of the hunting appointments, in her own delicate hand-writing, on her table, and is more *au fait* at the intricacies of Gravel-hill, and Holly-coppice, than the huntsman himself; and, as she says she owes all her virtues to her friend Miss Walcot, I conclude she ranks this amongst the number."

"And a great one it is, if a woman does marry a fox-hunter! Does Lord Frederick hunt?" asked his lordship, as the carriage, which contained the happy husband, passed them on its way to Elphinstone.

"I believe not. I saw him for two days, when he came out of Wales, from grousing, and I have never seen him since; so that I scarcely know what he does. He made me very angry, by refusing to

take me with him to Newmarket, in October:—it is the only place to which a lady, you know, cannot go alone.”

I believe his lordship’s answer was somewhat incoherent; for he saw before him a figure he thought he recognized, and which, *malgré* his philosophy, he had not been able to see quite unmoved. A lady, attended by a servant, (after speaking to the woman who opened the lodge gate for her,) passed from the avenue leading to Carleton, the seat of Sir John Trevor, and took the road to Elphinstone: the carriage soon came up to her, and was stopped by its driver, who was now convinced it was “the governess.” He remarked that the day was closing in, and advised her to hasten on; whilst Lady Frederick, with a mixture of good humour, and of a less amiable feeling, asked her to ride home. She knew she had been on a visit to Lady Trevor, and she thought she might thus learn something of a person who caused considerable interest in the neighbourhood; and if the truth must be told, she was beginning to tire of a man who was certainly, on the whole, rather dull till after dinner.

Gertrude declined the offered politeness, and the parties proceeded; Lord de Lisle driving so slowly as to keep pace with the pedestrian,—thus giving his companion an opportunity of addressing her, which she lost not a moment in doing.

“I have been telling Lord de Lisle, Miss Walcot, that it is you who have converted Mrs. Elphinstone, and made her such an obedient wife. It is true; is it not?”

Gertrude disclaimed all influence of the nature imputed to her.

Lord de Lisle thought it probable Miss Walcot would not undertake so mighty a task as the reforming of bad wives; and told her, he had one seated by his side who had not seen her husband for some months: however, he added, "I believe husbands in general would not think reform necessary, in such a case." To this bright remark he received no reply.

Gertrude bowed to Lady Frederick, and entered the Elphinstone grounds by a small gate, which admitted her to a shorter path than that which led to the principal entrance.

On the arrival of Lady Frederick at the house, she walked at once to her own rooms, declaring she was much too tired to see any one, and desired Lord de Lisle to give her love to Lord Frederick, and say they should meet in the saloon at eight o'clock. At that hour the affectionate couple met: when Lady Frederick entered the room, her husband was talking of his children to Fanny, with some degree of interest, speaking of their health and spirits as being excellent, and that they had quite recovered the measles, with which they had been attacked during the autumn.

"The measles!" said Lady Frederick, in a voice of consternation:—"I hope they don't look like some hideous children I saw in the village here one day,—all spotted, and with horrid weak eyes."

"As you never see them," said her husband, gravely, "it would matter little to you how horrid they looked; but, to put at rest your maternal anxieties, I assure you I never saw our girls so lovely, or so blooming."

"I am glad of that," said the wife, not regarding her husband's displeased voice and manner. "I should hate ugly children; and mine were very pretty."

"I wish," said Fanny, kindly trying to avert a 'retort courteous' from Lord Frederick,—"I wish you had brought them. Julia would have been pleased; and I should delight in introducing them to their cousins."

The announcement of dinner prevented the continuance of a conversation so inauspiciously begun. The party this day was unusually dull;—the sportsmen had had, as Elphinstone predicted, a "capital day;" and a capital day (in hunting) ever produces a stupid evening. The ladies, tired of themselves and each other, retired early; Fanny and Gertrude talked long and earnestly; and, when many were sleeping, they were deep in conversation.



CHAPTER XIV.

A LETTER, with the word "Belmont," at one corner, and bearing the impress of a ducal coronet, was given to Mrs. Elphinstone, on her entering the breakfast-room on the following morning: the cover contained a letter from the Duke of Belmont, stating that his daughter, the Lady Edith Clavering, was

commencing a journey to Deerhurst Castle, on a visit to Lord and Lady Lucy Graham; and that if agreeable to Mrs. Elphinstone to receive the fair traveller, she would rest for a few days at Elphinstone. Her ladyship was to be attended by her early friend and instructress, Mrs. Halford, and was represented by her father as likely to arrive on the day succeeding that on which his grace's letter would be received at Elphinstone;—he added, however, that heavy snow having fallen in the North, it was possible their travelling might be so retarded, as to delay the arrival of Lady Edith one day longer.

The Duke of Belmont, now in his fiftieth year, had been long a widower, his amiable duchess having lived only long enough to present him with one girl, the heroine of the present chapter. For some time after the death of his wife, the sorrowing husband refused to see the innocent cause of his bereavement; and consigning her to the care of nurses, left her in his mansion, in the North, where she had first seen the light, and returned to that busy scene of political intrigue from which, on his marriage, twelve months before, he had withdrawn; and, by plunging at once into all the mysteries of politics, endeavoured to forget the irreparable loss he had sustained.

Three-and-twenty years ago, (the period to which this part of my story refers,) the political principles of the Duke were not the fashionable politics of the day; but they were his real principles,—he boldly and honestly professed them, and never for one moment swerved from them: he had been indefatigable in bringing about two great measures,—two of the greatest that had ever been attempted or

achieved in the political history of this country;—he rarely visited his estate in the North of England:—he received, however, frequent tidings of the health of the infant Edith, and ere she had reached her fourth year, he had succeeded in obtaining for her the invaluable care of the lady I have already mentioned.

Mrs. Halford was, by birth and marriage, well connected; but the event which made her a widow, made it necessary she should resign the comforts of her own home, and seek a very doubtful share of them in the world:—her elegant manners, her fair character, and the fact of her being a perfect gentlewoman, were high recommendations to the lady employed by the Duke to seek out a proper friend and companion for his daughter. Mrs. Halford was prevailed on to take the charge offered her, and for nineteen years she had been the friend, the mother, the guide of her beloved Edith, when she was named as her companion to Deerhurst Castle. Until the period of Lady Edith's presentation, her father had seen her but seldom, satisfied, that under the direction of Mrs. Halford, she was making rapid progress in all that was most desirable and most delightful in woman. He suffered her to remain at Belmont until she had completed her eighteenth year;—her presentation at the liberal court of William the Fourth, was an event of much importance in the fashionable and gay world, on which she had now entered. Every body knew that the Duke of Belmont had one daughter, who must be very wealthy,—that she was still under the care of what was called a "governess," and that she was very pretty:—all this they knew;

but no one knew what (under the care of that "governess") her mind had become, or how noble and beautiful she really was.

Lady Catherine Bingham, a widowed sister of his grace of Belmont, was placed at the head of a magnificent establishment in Grosvenor-square; and introduced her hitherto secluded niece to that gay world, of which she had, as yet, only heard:—her admirable friend, Mrs. Halford, had talked to her of it as of a busy theatre, on which she would, ere long, be called to play her part;—she deemed it, however, vain and futile to point out to her the shoals and quick-sands which would meet her at every step, and equally useless would she have deemed it to teach her how to avoid them. For fourteen years she had instilled into the youthful mind of her pupil those bright precepts derived from the only sure source, and which her own admirable and undeviating example tended daily to strengthen and confirm. Whilst she described to her the advantages she possessed,—in birth, fortune, beauty, and talent,—she reminded her she was accountable, in no common degree, for these extraordinary gifts; and, so persuaded was she of the soundness of the principles which were fast rooted in her heart,—so convinced was she that all her thoughts, words, and actions were under the influence of the one only safe guide—Religion, that she sent her high-born, wealthy, and beautiful pupil into the world, without one fear for her safe passage through it,—without one fear that the high spirit, which sometimes led her into momentary indiscretions, would ever lead her into error. She saw her, night after night, return, un-

scathed, from the vortex of pleasure and flattery into which she now constantly entered;—she saw her pleased with gaiety and admiration,—heard her confessions of haughtiness and irritability, but she felt all was right within; and, as she saw her kneeling before her (as she had done from her earliest childhood) in the attitude of deep earnest prayer, tears of joy and gratitude flowed from her mild eyes, that she had been even remotely instrumental in forming the mind of the beautiful being who knelt at her feet; and then she remembered how little she had laboured in the formation of this splendid mind:—she had employed no threats, no punishment, no privation;—all had been the work of religious precept, and the result of that example which Edith had been taught by her aunt and father (alike convinced of Mrs. Halford's excellence) to look on as perfect. Oh! that parents, in consigning a child to the care of a governess, would (having carefully ascertained such to be the truth) impress on their minds the conviction that every thing said or done by the stranger about to be introduced into their house, was “wisest, discreetest, best;” and, as children are powerfully influenced by trifles, learn to treat her (as she really is) as the person of most importance in the family.

I shall treat more largely of this subject by-and-bye, when I hope, after pointing out the errors of parents, with regard to those to whose care they commit their children, I may be enabled to suggest at least a better order of things.

I return now to Lady Edith. She had reached the age of twenty-three without having ever been in love;

she had not had marriage pointed out to her as the "one thing needful;" and, although she had drawn around her numerous serious admirers, there was a propriety, a pride about her, which deterred the generality of her lovers from making those offers she had in no degree *authorized* them to make:—some, bolder than the rest, or less versed in the character of a really well-educated woman, ventured to prefer suits which were quietly and decidedly declined.—Thus I introduce Lady Edith Clavering, unfettered in hand or heart.

A visit to Lady Lucy Graham had long been in agitation, and it was now resolved the ensuing Christmas was to be passed with her, amid the magnificent festivities and unbounded hospitality that season never failed to call forth at Deerpark Castle.

Dinner had been delayed until eight o'clock on the first day mentioned as the one on which it was possible the travellers might arrive; but they came not, and the party was as dull as a party ever is, when a new addition to it, and that a person of importance, has been expected, and has not arrived. Lady Frederick never ceased to lament having to wait another day before something fresh would arise to amuse her. "I wish," she exclaimed, at dinner, "people would fix a time and keep it: I have been all day looking for Lady Edith, and there are now twenty-four hours longer to wait. It is very odd I should never have met her in town, or at Brighton, or Cheltenham."

"In town!" replied her husband, "it is just possible you might have met, although I imagine even there you move in a very different circle. At Brighton or

Cheltenham, I will venture to say, Lady Edith Clavering is never to be seen."

"Is she so much better than the rest of the world then?" asked Lord de Lisle.

"Than that portion of it which is to be found idling away their time at those sort of places. I have a mortal horror of people who, without the excuse of their health or of business, are to be found yearly haunting Brighton and Leamington. I never knew a man or woman enter into matrimony from meeting at a place of that description without repenting it most bitterly."

"They may do that and not meet at a watering place," said Lady Frederick, saucily.

"Very true," rejoined her husband.

"They say she is a terrible Whig," said Lord de Lisle, continuing a conversation on the subject of Lady Edith with Mrs. Elphinstone.

"I don't know precisely what you mean by a 'terrible Whig,'" said Fanny; "but when you have seen her ladyship, I think you will allow there is nothing very terrible about her."

"By a 'terrible Whig,'" answered Lord Oakeley laughing, "is meant every body who is not a terrible Tory."

"In plain terms then, a Radical," continued De Lisle.

"Well, I should like to see a Radical," said Lady Frederick. "What is he like?"

"What is he like?" replied Elphinstone, "why my good mother-in-law will tell you he is like the man who keeps the Hadley Arms, and who passes her ladyship as any other lady whom he does not know,

without taking off his hat. Ask Lord de Lisle what a Radical is like, and he will tell you that every man who differs from himself and the aristocracy of — shire, is a Radical, or very like one. However, if our expected visiter is what he styles her, we shall be disposed to become 'terrible Whigs' too."

"Well, at all events," answered Lord de Lisle, "they say she is dreadfully clever, and at least talks politics, and interferes at the county elections."

Whether it was that poor Gertrude had given his Lordship a surfeit of clever women, or that he really did feel himself eclipsed by them, I know not; but certain it is, he indemnified himself for his inferiority by abusing them when an opportunity offered; and it is equally certain too, that he always selected the silliest woman in the room (provided she was pretty) as his companion in the dance or the drive, or for a quiet flirtation on a sharp frosty morning when kept in doors, or at least when prevented hunting. He could not to this day understand his preference for one of the cleverest women he had ever seen,—a preference never quite given up, and which he now felt returning with provoking tenacity.

"I wonder who we shall meet at Elphinstone?" said Lady Edith Clavering to Mrs. Halford, as they changed horses for the last time previous to reaching their destination. "I suppose, all Tories, from my father's last caution to me, to hold fast my political faith in the bad atmosphere of —shire. I never exactly made out why he is so intimate with the Earl of Malden, and why he thinks so very highly of his son. He is a nice, gentlemanly, unaffected man, but not at all like what the Duke generally admires.

Mrs. Elphinstone," she continued "is a charming person. I met her one season in town ; she is sweetly pretty and amiable, but perhaps she is without any very striking traits in her character. I shall cling to you more than ever, dearest Mrs. Halford, now that I am really entrusted abroad without our good Lady Catherine. I shall consult your expressive eyes to see if I am within proper bounds."

"Rather consult your own heart and excellent understanding," said her friend.

"Ah ! but do you know I sometimes mistrust both, since I behaved so indiscreetly at the election for ——. If I see people act dishonourably, or hear them talk nonsense, I never can help saying what I afterwards feel I ought not to have said."

"It had been better, perhaps, the subject of politics, so all-absorbing to the Duke of Belmont, had not been so often and so freely discussed before you ; but since his Grace really thinks it essential to the formation of a woman's character, that she should have, and retain her own political opinions, I advise you to keep those in which you have been brought up, and which you say are now the result of inquiry and conviction. I now, my dear child, never do more than advise ; but let me use that privilege in suggesting that it were better you heard the silliest doctrines (if only of a political nature) in silence."

"Well, I will try ; but I never can like the Tories, they are so illiberal. I almost agree with Mrs. Evelyn Arbuthnot, that a Tory is either a fool or a knave."

If Edith could have seen the expressive eyes she had before alluded to, she would have seen they expressed any thing but approbation ; a silent pressure

of the hand, perhaps, told her so too,—or it might be her own heart. A short time brought them to the entrance of the park; and after driving some time through a magnificent avenue, they found themselves at the entrance of Elphinstone; its master and numerous servants appeared on the steps; and the former, after welcoming his high-born guest to his house, conducted her, with Mrs. Halford, to the presence of his wife.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Elphinstone party were unusually quick in descending to the saloon on the day of Lady Edith's arrival. All were anxious to see one of whom report said so much; who was allowed by all to be very handsome, and who was pronounced by Royalty itself, to enter a room better than any woman in England. She was the last who made her appearance; she entered leaning on the arm of Mrs. Halford. In spite of her talents and accomplishments, there was a degree of reserve and shyness about her, on her first introduction to strangers, which intercourse with the world had not tended to remove: it might be natural to her, or it might be the effect of the entire seclusion in which the early years of her life had been passed. Be that as it may, a person at first seeing her would

pronounce her haughty and reserved ; but her every movement was graceful and dignified. She was not very tall, but elegantly formed ; her complexion was brilliant, her eyes large and full of expression, her features good, without being perfect ; her mouth might by some be objected to as too wide, but her teeth were so fine, the defect (if it were one) was forgotten when she spoke. In spite of the slight tincture of shyness to which I have alluded, Lady Edith Clavering's look and manner plainly told that she never for one moment lost sight of the fact of her high birth, and of the influence of the Duke her father, both as a politician and as a man of enormous wealth. She was introduced to two or three of the guests, and soon after conducted by Mr. Elphinstone to the place of honour at his table. She spoke very little, but scrutinized every person at table individually ; her radiant eyes however *rested* only on two persons,—the gentleman who was placed on the right of the lady of the house, and the lady who was seated by him.

“Who is that most extraordinary looking person?” she inquired of Elphinstone, directing him towards the gentleman just mentioned.

“Is it possible you don't know him? Why that extraordinary looking person, as you term him, is no other than the much-talked-of Spencer Beresford, now, by the death of a relation, Lord de Lisle ; but did you never meet him in town?”

“I certainly never met him, or I never could have forgotten him,” she said, smiling ; “but why is he much talked of? for what is he so famous?”

“Why really that is more than I can tell you ; but certain it is, his lordship's head is nearly turned

with the persevering attention he has met with, and still meets with, from the fairest, aye, and from the cleverest of your sex."

"Is it possible?" she said, still looking at the subject of their conversation as she spoke, "that any body ever loved him? it must have been his wealth."

"One day I will tell you more of him."

"Ah! I am satisfied," said the Lady Edith; "and can only say ladies have very strange tastes: but tell me who is that exquisitely intellectual looking person, who is seated by his Lordship: I certainly never saw her before."

"Then let me advise you, when you go to the drawing-room, to claim from Mrs. Elphinstone an introduction to her: she is worth the trouble of knowing."

"How strange it is, but how true, that the only silent people are those who look as if they could say the most, whilst the decidedly silly are ever bent on engrossing the whole attention of a party."

This was only intended to be heard by Mr. Elphinstone, but was said in tones somewhat higher than was approved by the gentle Mrs. Halford, and which were distinctly heard by Lady Frederick Howard.

"Then if your ladyship thinks so, you must of course believe Lord de Lisle and Miss Walcot have both much to say, for they have not yet spoken a word," was the remark of the lively Lady Frederick.

"You had better not begin to draw inferences from what you have heard, Julia," said Elphinstone.

"Oh!" she replied, laughing, "you mean to insinuate I have talked a great deal, and am, therefore, very silly; but tell me, you have been to —, did

you hear any thing of our excursion thither on Tuesday? Had the good people made us out?"

"I assure you," replied Mr. Elphinstone, "you puzzled them to your heart's content. I found the usual trio of curious idlers assembled round the post-office, waiting for the possible arrival of a servant in green and silver."

"Delightful! Did you gratify them?"

"Yes; I told them the lady who ate her luncheon in the street, was the wife of Lord Frederick Howard, and the daughter of Sir Charles and Lady Lyster; and that the gentleman in scarlet, was the Right Honourable Lord de Lisle, of Stratton-house, in the county of ——."

On the retirement of the ladies, Lady Edith Clavering lost no time in claiming from Mrs. Elphinstone the introduction to Miss Walcot, which had been recommended to her; and, on obtaining it, seated herself by her, and endeavoured to ascertain if the mind of this lovely woman were really what her countenance promised.

Lady Edith's penetration led her to discern in a moment that her rank must be equal to that of any person present, and a very little conversation with her convinced her of her great intellectual superiority; but she saw she was scarcely noticed by the Countess of Oakeley or Lady Louisa Howard, nor did she receive that attention from the men her beauty and appearance (not to mention her place at Mrs. Elphinstone's table) ought to have procured her.

Lady Edith had been so accustomed to see the most complete deference paid to Mrs. Halford by the guests who assembled at her father's, that it never occurred

to her that a lady, similarly situated, and equally deserving, should be treated in any other manner. Lady Edith had yet to learn the littleness of sentiment that may attach to rank and fortune; she had imbibed her own liberal and enlightened ideas from the good and the great, by whom, from her earliest infancy, she had been fostered,—from her noble-minded father and her amiable aunt. It is not on our first introduction to society, that we discover the meanness and illiberality which surround us. We expect to find the world what it has been to us in the persons of our parents, of our most intimate friends, and sometimes in that of our governess. In her early friends, she had seen nothing that was not good and excellent, and she was unwilling to believe there could exist people of rank and education, who could delight in wounding the feelings of a fellow-creature.

Miss Walcot's case was somewhat different to the generality of cases which daily present themselves; she was so powerfully supported by Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone; they were so careful of her comfort and of all her finer feelings, that not the haughtiest among their guests dare have treated her with open rudeness. Even the bold and unfeeling Countess of Oakeley contented herself with never vouchsafing her the slightest notice; but she dared not insult by sarcasm or innuendo (a very common mode of insult) one so highly protected as Gertrude Walcot. In making it their earnest wish that she should appear in all the society which was to be seen at their house, Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone were not satisfied with merely telling their guests who she was, but by their own undeviating kindness and attention, shewed their wish

she should receive that share of politeness to which her birth and her virtues entitled her. In most cases they succeeded in their aim.

And here let me hint to those of my readers who may be disposed to follow the example of Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone, in drawing from her solitude the lady to whom they have committed the important trust of their children's temporal and eternal good, not to rest here; but to insist, by their own example, that she is treated with equal respect as others who may meet round the same table, or in the same polished circle in the drawing-room. Against the introduction of the governess into general society, it may be urged, that the children, who are her peculiar care, must thus be left to servants. In most cases I am aware this would be the objection; and, admitting this, I forbear here to urge it; but what I contend for is, that if brought forward at all, it shall be as a *gentlewoman*. No rude inquiries as to school-room proceedings;—no lunching whilst the governess takes her comfortless dinner;—no retiring with the pupils at a stated hour;—no mixture of the duties of the governess and the nursery-maid. But I will not stop here to enumerate the different modes I have seen practised, if not for the express purpose, at least having the effect of wounding the feelings of the “governess.”

Lady Edith and Gertrude were conversing with ease on the various topics which presented themselves; and, when on the subject of education, Gertrude explained her situation at Elphinstone. This caused no surprise to her fair companion; she looked at her own beloved Mrs. Halford, and rejoiced there

were others as fortunate in selecting a friend and monitress for their children as *her* parent had been.

The mention of Lady Mary Poyntz made those lovely women still more at ease with each other; she was extremely well known to the daughter of the Duke of Belmont, and was the intimate friend of Gertrude. And it was with much pleasure they found that, in the month of February, they should perhaps meet at the house of their mutual friend. Lady Mary Poyntz had a noble place in Gloucestershire, and it was there Lady Edith had been invited to remain a short time on her way to London; and there, too, Miss Walcot had been urged to pay a visit about the same period. Her acceptance of the invitation had rested on the state of health in which Lady Trevor (to whom Gertrude's presence became more and more necessary) might be at the period named. Her disease, though certain, was attended with all those fluctuations to which it is ever liable; leaving it a matter of doubt whether she might not linger to the early days of spring, or whether a few hours might not terminate her earthly career.

The conversation of these young ladies received no check on the entrance of the gentlemen: the important fact appeared equally unnoticed by them. It would be scarcely possible to conceive finer specimens of beauty than those presented by these singularly lovely women. Lady Edith's dress of pale pink satin was of the most fashionable order; brilliants shone in her luxuriant brown hair; and as she conversed with her new-found friend, shyness and reserve were banished from her looks; all was gaiety and smiling

animation. The "governess," in her plain unpretending robe of black satin, wore no ornament of any kind. Her raven hair was parted on her noble forehead in the simplest manner : she was, as usual, pale, and almost grave ; but her eyes were fixed with a look of intense admiration on the young and beautiful creature beside her.

The subject the Lady Edith had selected, and which, to her warm heart and peculiar mode of thinking, was one of extreme interest, was the wrongs of Poland ; a small book which had been some time before the public, but which her father had only recently given her to read, whilst it enchanted her with the talented authoress, had filled her lively imagination with feelings and images she was now describing to her companion. Her own liberal principles were very freely expressed, and a knot of gentlemen had gathered near the sofa on which she sat, to listen to sentiments so new to most of them, particularly as uttered by a woman.

Lord de Lisle listened with surprise to tolerable sense, from one of a sex he had believed, except in one solitary instance, to have been nearly *senseless*. He soon sought refuge by the side of Lady Frederick Howard, whence he was not driven by any overflowing of reason or intellect.

Mrs. Halford, who thought her pupil had engaged more than her share of attention, reminded her she had been summoned to the harp by Mrs. Elphinstone,—a hint she obeyed with the utmost readiness and good humour ; indeed, so absorbed had she been with her subject, that she was equally unaware of the

number and vicinity of her auditors, or Mrs. Elphinstone's request for music.

Lord Frederick Howard had during the day appeared particularly depressed. He had joined the party at dinner,—had left the table immediately on the retirement of the ladies; and a note was now brought to Mr. Elphinstone, stating that pressing and unavoidable business obliged him immediately to quit Elphinstone, and on inquiry it was found his lordship had entered his travelling carriage soon after dinner, and was now probably many miles on his road to —, to which place the postillions were directed to drive with all possible speed. It was not deemed necessary to make any announcement to Julia until the next day; for as the affectionate couple never met until breakfast, no surprise would be felt by the wife at the non-appearance of the husband. Fanny and Elphinstone were not without suspicion: the letter-bag was generally unlocked by the latter; and he had that morning presented Lord Frederick with a letter—ill-folded, ill-sealed, and ill-directed—in a female hand—the post-mark, “London.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE news of Lord Frederick's departure was communicated to his wife, when she made her appearance at a late hour the following morning. She expressed no surprise, for she felt none; and merely remarking he might have had the civility to tell her he was going, as she had some commissions in town—whether she supposed he was gone—she announced her own intention of leaving Elphinstone immediately after a ball which was to be given there in a few days; politely adding, that every body was dull and stupid—more so than ever, she thought—and she found that no amusement was to be derived from Lady Edith Clavering.

The evening of the ball arrived; and short as had been the summons to the scene of gaiety, it was very fully attended. The county families who never went to town, were very anxious to see one of whose beauty so much was said; and they were anxious to see if the daughter of a Whig nobleman were unlike the daughter of their own Tory gentry. At ten o'clock nearly every body had arrived; and Elphinstone, leading in his sweet wife, hastened to the music-room, which was fitted up as a temporary ball-room. Their reception of their guests was kind and cordial; and the hearty shake of the hand bestowed by them on many of the visitors, absolutely shocked Lady

Oakeley, who witnessed this vulgar ebullition of country hospitality with surprise and disgust. Her ladyship—profusely decorated with diamonds, and wearing a plume of feathers which would not have disgraced St. James's—walked up and down the room, surveying the company with haughty impertinence. There was not an individual present, save the party in the house, whom she had ever seen before,—whose name she knew,—or of whose claim to rank and fashion she had ever been informed. Her good humour was not increased by seeing Lady Edith Clavering enter the room, leaning on the arm of Lord Graham, and followed by Captain Herbert Lyster, leading in the “governess.”

The respectable band which the neighbourhood afforded (not Weippert's), gave intimation it was time to form a quadrille, and Lady Edith was led to the top of the room by Lord de Lisle. To this gentleman she had, during their short acquaintance, taken one of those strong dislikes not to be accounted for, and not to be overcome;—not that her ladyship had at all endeavoured to overcome her prejudice in this instance—but I speak of dislikes in general; an effort to conquer them invariably strengthens them. She looked reproachfully at Elphinstone; and, in a manner indicative of any thing rather than pleasure, she began the quadrille. Her partner soon found that even *dancing* with a clever woman was disagreeable. Her ladyship's dancing, however, was the perfection of grace and propriety; and, remembering that a quadrille, like every thing else in this transitory world, must come to an end, she acquitted herself admirably. She never once addressed her

partner during the dance;—indeed she never had spoken to him, except to thank him for dissecting with his penknife the seal of a letter he saw her anxious to preserve unbroken. She told Gertrude, that his lordship was the only man she had ever seen to whom she found it quite impossible to address a remark. To some, she said, it was possible to talk nonsense, and in some cases it was allowable; to others—indeed to the majority—she found all topics, whether of books, politics, or people, easy to converse on; but to Lord de Lisle, she could say nothing—literally nothing. He sometimes looked as if he were not without ideas,—but she had never heard him express one. She rejoined her friend Lord Graham, who had seen the duke on the preceding day, and from whom he brought letters. It was agreed he was to convey her to Deerpark on the following day, from which place they were only forty miles distant.

Captain Lyster's arrival had taken place in the morning; but he had only seen Fanny and Miss Walcot. He looked pale and ill at ease. He declined accounting for his unexpected return until after the festivities were ended.

Lady Edith, with partners more agreeable to her, entered with spirit and animation into the pleasures afforded her, and she found the evening rapidly passing away. She won the hearts of the ladies by her good-humour and unassuming conduct; and her exquisite beauty was long remembered by those who were destined never to see her again. An incident, trivial in itself, but showing strongly the ruling defect of her character, occurred during the evening.

She wore a costly bracelet of pearls and emeralds, which probably, on her taking off her glove, had dropped from her arm. At supper the trinket was missed, and strict search was made for it, but without success. At length, at the close of the quadrille, which it was intended should be the last, she was told that Lord de Lisle had found the bracelet, and would restore it to the fair owner on condition she would ask for it, and allow him to clasp it on her arm.

"Are you authorized to deliver that message?" asked she of Lord Oakeley, who had brought it to her.—His lordship declared he was.

"Then," said her ladyship, "I must be content to lose my bracelet. My acquaintance with Lord de Lisle is far too slight to authorize his sending or my acting on such a message."

The remonstrances of Mr. Elphinstone, and the anxious looks of Mrs. Halford, were all in vain;—nothing would induce her to make the slightest attempt at regaining her lost property; and as Lord de Lisle could not prevail on her ladyship to yield—and as he had never in his own life been known to cede a point, however trifling in itself—he contented himself with putting this jewel of discord into his waistcoat pocket, and condemning the whole race of women as alike obstinate and perverse. It never entered his head, how much on this, and all occasions, he merited the epithets he so liberally bestowed on the other sex. With the exception of this little *brouillerie*, the evening passed off delightfully. Those of the guests who remained, and those whose proximity to home allowed them to

return, all concurred in thinking Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone the most improved and delightful people in the world; indeed, they thought it was difficult to believe the latter was really sister to the Ladies Oakeley and Frederick Howard: the one so rude and so haughty, the other so silly and so bordering on incorrect, both in her dress and manners.

More than one *tête-a-tête* took place that night, or rather that morning, after the departure of the guests. Mrs. Halford sought the dressing-room of her pupil; Fanny that of the governess; and Elphinstone and Herbert Lyster sat late in the library. The subjects of their interviews were various;—a confession of hauteur and irritability on the part of Lady Edith; and a remonstrance so gentle as scarcely to be termed such, from the friend of her childhood, the monitress of her riper years, produced a promise from Mrs. Halford, that she would herself claim the bracelet from the obstinate retainer of it; and an assurance from her docile pupil, that she would at least try and be more tolerant towards those she could not quite approve.

“But surely, dearest Mrs. Halford,” she said, earnestly appealing to her friend, “you would not have had me ask that very odious Lord de Lisle for my bracelet, and submit to his clasping it on my arm?”

“Certainly not; there was nothing in your intimacy with him to warrant such a freedom. It was ill-judged on his part to make such a stipulation the price of the trinket; yet, without casting a shadow of blame on you for your refusal, I believe there are many young ladies with delicacy equal to your own,

who would have quietly submitted to the prescribed terms, as the best way of ending what she did not approve. At any rate, my own sweet Edith," she said, "there are two ways of being equally decided;—you did not, I think, choose the least objectionable;—what does your own heart say?"

"That I was wrong—very wrong—and acted more on my dislike to the man, than to any thing else. I can only say, as the children say, I will never do so again; and, like the said children, (I fear) forget to keep my word. Oh, I have a great deal to alter in me yet!"

The beautiful girl threw herself at Mrs. Halford's feet as she finished speaking, and prayed fervently for the aid of that blessed Spirit, which she well knew could alone turn her heart to that perfection to which it so nearly approached. After this her last duty, she affectionately embraced her friend, and, under the superintendence of her dexterous waiting-maid, had soon forgotten all things in deep sleep. Mrs. Halford's rest was longer in coming; she knew the purport of the visit to Deerhurst, and sighed whilst she reflected how the prejudices and determined temper of her pupil might militate against the wishes of the Duke of Belmont. But I will not anticipate; and, leaving the fair Edith to her repose, and her friend to her reflections, enter the dressing-room, for one minute, of the Governess.

In spite of the fatigue she felt, Fanny was all anxiety to learn those particulars of her brother's return, with which, from her position during the past day and evening, she had had no means of becoming acquainted; but of which she was sure that Gertrude

was well informed. From her she learnt that Captain Lyster had been induced, in the first instance, to return to Elphinstone, in consequence of information relative to Lady Trevor; and, secondly, from having heard reports of a painful nature, which materially concerned members of his own family. "He claims," added Gertrude, "the permission which has been accorded him to see poor Catherine; and promises to wait patiently for the time when he may see for the last time, the only woman he has ever loved. There will be in all likelihood sufficient warning of her approaching dissolution, to admit him to this sad indulgence."

"I reckon of to-morrow," said Fanny; "for with the exception of the party to Deerhurst, there is not one of my guests whose departure I shall not hail with satisfaction. Lord de Lisle still lingers, I find, and Lady Oakeley seems bent on attending the January ball. I can make no impression on her on the subject of dismissing that wretched Miss Mason, and supplying her place more worthily."

The sound of Mr. Elphinstone's approaching footsteps warned Fanny to seek her own room. The conference in the library had been sufficiently distressing. From Captain Lyster's account, no doubt remained that Lord Frederick Howard had left England, accompanied by the young lady so highly recommended by Lady Lyster as a proper governess for her grandchildren; and a letter to Mrs. Elphinstone, in the morning, signed by a name unknown to her, but which she found to be written by the wife of the clergyman of the parish, in which were left these

poor children, announced the fact of Miss Smith having left the house, (it was suspected,) under the most disgraceful circumstances; and that finding the infant daughters of Lord Frederick Howard thus left entirely to the care of servants, Mrs. Anderson had humanely taken the deserted children to her own house, where she intended to retain them until she received instructions from Mrs. Elphinstone. The first step, then, to be taken, was to inform Lady Frederick of her husband's elopement, and to learn her determination as to the children.

Elphinstone, with more tenderness and consideration than his heartless sister deserved, undertook the painful task of informing her of a fact which greatly distressed him, however little it might touch her ladyship, and of pointing out to her her duty as to her mode of proceeding in the affair. For this purpose he sought the dressing-room of the lady in the morning after the ball. On learning that she had already breakfasted, and would only make her appearance down stairs for the purpose of bidding adieu to the assembled party, previous to her entering her travelling carriage for Brighton, where she was on the point of visiting a lady as young and silly as herself, and perhaps more unprincipled, Elphinstone found her still *en robe de chambre*, and in high spirits, surveying the operations of Mademoiselle Victorine, who, with the assistance of an inferior servant, was filling imperials, boxes, and trunks of every size and shape.

"Why," she exclaimed, on seeing who entered, by permission of Mademoiselle's "*entrez*," "what brings you here? what can you want? Not, I hope, to per-

suade me to defer my journey? I have ordered beds to be prepared at Birmingham, and I am bent on sleeping there to night!"

"No," said her visitor, "not to persuade you to do any thing; but to tell you *that* which may possibly urge you on, even beyond the place you have named; but I must talk to you alone."

Julia, delighted at the idea of hearing something which she fancied savoured of mystery, although struck with the gravity of Elphinstone's face, dismissed her attendants, *sans ceremonie*, and then learnt the tidings of her husband's defection, and of the consequent desertion of her poor children. For a moment anger and mortification filled her breast and choked her utterance; but she quickly recovered the use of her tongue, and exclaimed, "This is all Lady Lyster's fault; I desired her not to send me a pretty governess: why did she disobey me? Augusta made it one of the conditions on hiring her governess, that she should be ugly; and if my injunctions had been attended to, Frederick would not have made himself so very silly."

"And his poor little girls would not have been left to the neglect of servants, or the charity of strangers," said Elphinstone, disgusted with the heartless anger of Julia, and her total forgetfulness of her children.

"Ah, true! I forgot them; but I always thought them too young for any thing but the nursery; and thither they must now return. You need not, surely, talk of their being left to charity."

"Not whilst they have a mother's care, certainly," replied Elphinstone. "What are your plans?—you will doubtless hasten home directly?"

"You cannot be serious!" said the unfeeling Julia. "What more can I do for them than their servants can?"

"What a stranger has already done,—what strangers must do, if *you* will not,—rescue them from servants, from total, shameful neglect!"

For a moment Lady Frederick quailed under the severe and open brow of her admirable brother. But no effect was produced; she was too heartless, too fashionable, in the worst meaning of the word, to feel for any human being but herself; and she declared, in unmeasured terms, her determination not to give up her journey to Brighton; and to leave Elphinstone the moment her carriage was packed.

"Never to re-enter it!" said the now thoroughly incensed Elphinstone.—Lady Frederick never saw either Elphinstone or its master again!



CHAPTER XVII.

No time was lost by Fanny or her amiable husband in putting into execution the plan formed for their hapless little relatives. A confidential servant, who had long been nurse in the family, was despatched to —, with a letter to the benevolent Mrs. Anderson, gratefully thanking her for the part she had acted;

and authorizing her to trust her charges to the bearer of the letter, who was ordered to travel at a rate best suited to the youth of the almost infant girls. Preparations were made for their reception, and Mr. Elphinstone wrote to the Duke of Belgrave, stating the unfortunate occurrence, wounding, as little as the nature of the case would admit, the feelings of the father; and softening, for the sake of his wife, conduct on the part of Julia, which, in fact, admitted of no palliation.

Lady Edith Clavering had not failed to remind Mrs. Halford of her promise of herself claiming the bracelet,—a promise that lady fulfilled, by requesting Lord de Lisle to restore to her a trinket which must otherwise be lost, as she should certainly interfere in preventing Lady Edith applying for it. His lordship for a minute appeared to have slept away all recollection of the fact. Lord Oakeley, however, took care to enlighten him on the subject, by claiming, in his turn, the bracelet, which he had agreed should be given up to the Earl, provided *he* failed in inducing the young lady to accede to his request, with the payment of a wager of five sovereigns, if his lordship should succeed when *he* had failed. The money soon followed the bracelet. On Lord Oakeley offering to restore it to Lady Edith, she immediately held out her arm, and retrieved the gems which had cost her so much trouble, and Lord de Lisle so many sovereigns.

The party to Deerhurst were the first to depart,—not before Edith had obtained from Mrs. Elphinstone a promise to pay a long visit to Belmont, with Gertrude and her children, as soon as the London winter

should be over, that is, in June, when the ladies of the Duke of Belmont's family always left town.

Lord de Lisle stood on the steps of the entrance, to witness the departure of the high-born and haughty Lady Edith, who had, he allowed, more than her share of beauty, and perhaps talent, and certainly a most undue share of her sex's besetting sin,—obstinacy.

As the morning papers were not silent on the subject of Lord Frederick's delinquency, and as many of the guests of the ball were still at the house, Fanny prevailed on her sister to avoid what, to another woman, would have been a painful meeting, and to allow her carriage to draw up to a more private entrance;—the adieux of the sisters were cold and constrained. Elphinstone could scarcely recover himself sufficiently to see Julia previous to her departure, so much had he been shocked by her conduct;—willing, however, to spare the remarks of the servants, he met her ladyship at the foot of the stairs, and, without one word of adieu, placed her in her carriage, into which she was followed by Mademoiselle Victorine, who was, she declared, "much better than nothing" as a travelling companion.

Some more departures of the neighbouring gentry took place, and left only a small party at Elphinstone. Riding, driving, and billiards were resorted to, to destroy the ennui generally succeeding unusual gaiety. De Lisle strolled towards the little gate, which admitted Miss Walcot on her return from Carleton, whither he believed she had departed, accompanied by Herbert Lyster, who had returned,

and was then walking in the conservatory, in conversation with his sister. In about an hour he descried Gertrude returning from her visit; he joined her,—they walked slowly to the house; they met again at dinner, to which his lordship did ample justice, quaffed his champagne with his usual *goût*, and evinced no symptoms of embarrassment or mortification, when he requested horses from — might be at the door at twelve on the following day. No questions were asked, as to the cause of an intention which had not previously been mentioned:—there was one who could have told the reason, but not a word passed the lips of the “governess;” she scorned the vanity which might have led some women to tell that they had refused the object of so much perseverance,—the fashionable and admired possessor of a title, and a splendid fortune. When they met again it was under far different circumstances. His lordship’s wreath of willow was soon thrown aside, and he never more ventured to fall in love with a *woman of talent*; and he did Gertrude the justice to allow, in speaking of the sex in general, that he had known one disinterested woman, although he sometimes thought Gertrude’s firm rejection of him was more to be attributed to her obstinacy, than to want of attachment; he had a due share of his sex’s vanity, and perhaps, in this instance, it led him not very far from the truth. However that might be, the countenance of the “governess” was tranquil as usual, and her duties as regularly fulfilled:—with the real feelings of her heart we meddle not.

The Countess of Oakeley had expressed herself in no very measured terms of Lord Frederick’s “vile

conduct," blaming at the same time her mother's extreme folly, in sending a pretty girl to be thrown in the way of an idle young man in the country. She saw nothing particularly blameable in Julia; she certainly could not help her husband's bad taste, nor did she see any use in her returning home at that dull season, merely to see her children were properly nursed; and of course, as to educating them, or even providing a governess for them, that she was quite incompetent to.

Elphinstone advised an application to be made to Lady Lyster;—it was probable she might have another of the daughters of her *femme de chambre* to recommend. He expressed himself in the most decided manner with regard to Julia, whom he did not hesitate to accuse as the cause of her husband's bad conduct, declaring he believed her own but little better. Howard was once as good a fellow as ever lived, and would have made an excellent husband, if he had met with a woman of commonly proper conduct,—or who possessed one grain of common sense or feeling. He added, that her head and heart were alike cold and empty, and that she should never more enter his house, unless she entered it with her children, and in the performance of her duties.

A violent letter arrived from Lady Lyster, lavishing abuse without end on the delinquent husband,—sympathising with her beautiful and ill-used daughter, and desiring Fanny not to encourage more worthless husbands, by sheltering the children. Her ladyship made no mention of the wretched girl, who, at her recommendation, was received into an office of so

much trust, and that, too, under circumstances that half excused her crime;—left, during the long evenings of autumn, to her solitary room, with a mind vacant and unemployed, little wonder she first permitted, and then liked, the visits of the man, who, as the father of her pupils, ought to have been her friend and protector. A very few weeks made the weak girl the prey of one many years older than herself, and of a person and manners eminently pleasing. He saw her, pretty, kind to his little girls, and watching them, during their illness, with an assiduity which did her credit, and which they had never known from a mother. His wife had refused to remain with him during the shooting season;—she absented herself, and wrote only once to desire to join his party to Newmarket: he refused this request, and, until they met at Elphinstone, he had been a stranger to her movements. He found her there vain, cold, and heartless as ever,—professing no affection either for him or his children. A different conduct might have saved him; as it was, a letter from his unhappy victim, stating that she had been obliged to seek him in London, decided him: he joined her there, and they immediately left England together.

Towards the middle of the day on which it was probable the travellers would arrive, the sound of carriage-wheels attracted all the children to the windows. They saw their favourite nurse standing by the door of a carriage, and lifting from it two little girls, so enveloped in furs that it was scarcely possible to decide on what they were. They were

immediately taken to Mrs. Elphinstone's room, and, on being released from the coverings which the severity of the weather had rendered necessary, two little creatures, of three and five years old, as beautiful as possible, presented themselves. They returned their aunt's caresses with pleasure; they looked healthy and merry, and what the French call *bien soigné*, and it was very evident that, if not judiciously treated, they had never met with unkindness. The meeting between the numerous cousins was joyous in the extreme, and Julia and Ellen appeared reconciled to not seeing "dear papa," in the delight of seeing so many little boys and girls. They soon appeared completely at home, expected to have found papa at Elphinstone, and wondered where their governess could be gone! She had kissed them one night, after they were in bed; and Julia told Ellen she had been crying, for her own little cheek was wet, and in the morning she was gone quite away. Their mother they never mentioned, unless spoken to on the subject, when they always spoke of her as their pretty mamma, who bought each a wax doll, at a fancy fair. They appeared very intelligent, and particularly sweet-tempered, and nothing could exceed their fairy loveliness: they were very diminutive, and looked more like babies than they really were. They spoke (as children ever do of the last new acquaintance) of Mrs. Anderson as a nice good lady, who undressed them by her own fire, and without any maid to help her, "all her own self." If the Elphinstones had previously wondered at Julia's indifference towards her children, they wondered even more when they

saw and knew them,—so lovely were they, so tractable, and so affectionate.

Elphinstone was now comparatively quiet and empty. Christmas had passed away in what ought to be delightful society; but, as is too often the case, the *family* party here was far from being a friendly one. Lady Oakeley was so dissimilar to Fanny, or her brother, that conversation between them was always constrained, and very often querulous.—Herbert had not all Fanny's indolence of temper, though their characters in that respect were very similar; and he never hesitated to contradict or ridicule his haughty sister's prejudices and opinions, whenever they reached his ear. He walked daily to the lodge at Carleton, with Gertrude, and as regularly met her on her return.

Lady Trevor still lingered; but her medical attendants declared her so much worse, that she could not, they believed, outlive the month of January; it was, therefore, at length decided, that one day in the ensuing week, when Sir John Trevor would be at —, for the purpose of passing a week of festivity, and presiding at dinners connected with the intellectual diversion of hunting, the interview between Captain Lyster and the dying Catherine should take place. Gertrude and Lady Trevor's nurse were to be the only witnesses of this melancholy farewell; and it was also decided that, if all was over by the 10th of February, the latter should set forward on her journey into Gloucestershire, a step now become necessary, as her own health had visibly declined during her painful attendance on her hapless friend.

Letters from Lady Edith spoke with delight of

their meeting. She offered Gertrude a seat in her carriage to Lady Mary's, and was to spend one night at Mrs. Elphinstone's, in her way thither: she mentioned Deerhurst as being full of company; that the amusements were varied and very pleasant; and she spoke with regret of the time of her departure as connected with Lord and Lady Lucy,—but anticipated with real pleasure a meeting with her friends at Elphinstone. Letters had also been received from the Duke of Belgrave, lamenting bitterly the infatuation of his unhappy son. He delicately hinted at the little unanimity of feeling which had appeared to exist between the husband and wife; but ventured to believe that, could Lady Frederick be prevailed on to overlook an error, for which she certainly must a little blame herself, that his son was really too well disposed not to return to his home, and the children he so much loved. "But it must," the duke added, "be to witness a more tender mother, and a more domestic wife." He requested Elphinstone to make any arrangement he might deem best for his grandchildren, and assured him of his ready concurrence and assistance.

Just at this time intelligence reached Elphinstone of the increasing indisposition of his brother, Lord Lismore; and a request from Lord Malden, that he would come to town, hurried him from home some days sooner than he had intended. The papers spoke of Brighton as being extremely full, and of the great beauty and gaiety of Lady Frederick Howard, who had taken a house in Regency-square, for the remainder of the season. She never wrote or made any inquiry as to her children, after learning

from Fanny that they were safe with her until proper arrangements could be made for them. This satisfied the vain and heartless mother, as to the fate of the children she was destined never more to behold!

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was towards the close of a stormy day, in January, that Gertrude and Herbert Lyster entered the carriage that was to convey them to the presence of the dying Catherine. The north wind, in melancholy murmurs, struck on their ears as they drove through the long avenue of leafless trees, which led to the great gates of Elphinstone, and increased the gloom and sadness which depressed them. Neither party spoke. The "governess," herself suffering from ill-health and anxiety, reviewed the short but faulty lives of the two people, who were about to meet for the last time in this world. She remembered (how short a time since!) Catherine Heathcote in the bloom of health and beauty,—gay and thoughtless, but affectionate in disposition, equable in temper; and then again, she saw her, equally unable to resist tyranny, or to perform the duties that tyranny had imposed on her. When next she beheld her, it was as the querulous and oftentimes provoking wife,—the confirmed

and suffering victim of consumption ; and now, she was sinking surely and rapidly to her early grave,—acknowledging, too late, those divine truths which would have made her (had she been earlier taught them) at least a good, if not a fond wife to the man whom she had consented to receive as her husband, and who, whatever were his errors, was disposed to have treated her with unbounded indulgence : then, too, she would have shuddered to foster a passion for another man, which she would have known was in itself criminal. As it was, she had heard divine truths from the lips of her friend ; they had taught her deep repentance, and had smoothed her passage to the grave. Of the constant lover of this unfortunate girl, Gertrude thought too, with pity, but with a severity justifiable in one who was herself so rigidly virtuous. He had not, it is true, actually tried to seduce Lady Trevor from her duty, but he had cherished a love for her so unreservedly, that she was constantly spoken to on the subject of his unhappiness, of his ill looks, and of all those symptoms which told her a tale of truth and constancy. her romantic nature was not slow in believing. On her return to England, she consented to receive letters at his passionate request ; and her rapidly declining health alone induced her to refuse a meeting, which it required all Gertrude's earnest and deep reasoning to convince her was wrong. By slow degrees she was persuaded of this, and the matter was set at rest by an assurance from Gertrude, that on Catherine's death-bed, Herbert Lyster should receive her last farewell. Certain symptoms of near dissolution, which had rapidly evinced themselves, induced her

no longer to refuse her sanction to a meeting that would, in its effects, be salutary rather than dangerous; indeed, she anticipated actual good to Herbert, from the sad scene he was about to witness. He would, after it was over, think of his poor Catherine as she really was, rather than as she had been: romance would be lost in reality. These thoughts and reflections lasted until the carriage stopped at Carleton. They entered the hall, and ascended the thickly-carpeted stairs with the silent footsteps that feared to disturb the last hours of one now nearly insensible to all around her. The unhappy Herbert was requested to wait in an ante-room until Gertrude had herself ascertained the state of the sufferer. The room in which he found himself had been fitted up for Catherine, on her marriage, with extraordinary taste and elegance. A full-length painting of herself was placed over the fire-place. It represented her as Herbert had last seen her, previous to the few agonized moments of their parting;—it represented her young, beautiful, gay, and smiling. He gazed with anguish at this lovely portrait. A father's pride had caused it to be painted; and, at Sir John's request, it had been removed to Carleton.

An elderly female, who had been the constant attendant on poor Catherine from the cradle to the grave, and whose swollen eyes and almost inarticulate words, gave fearful evidence of the painful scene she had just quitted, now entered, and requested Herbert to follow her. The sight of this person called up afresh more grievous recollection of the past;—but on this he had no time to dwell, for he found himself almost instantly in the presence of the only woman

he had ever loved, or, as he then believed, that he ever could love. On a magnificent bed of pale blue merino, which a few little months before had been fitted up for the reception of a fair and beautiful bride, lay the dying Catherine. She was supported by pillows;—her dress was exquisitely neat;—the blond cap shaded her pale face, on which some wax candles, shaded with ground glass, shed their pure and steady light;—her eyes were dim and sunken, and not even the brilliancy of disease was discoverable in them;—one thin white hand clasped that of the “governess;” the other—bearing the insignia of her fatal marriage—she extended to Herbert. He knelt beside Gertrude, whose head rested on the arm of a couch, which was placed close to the bed. The invalid evidently experienced some deep emotion, as she fixed her eyes on the grief-stricken countenance of her lover. She speedily recovered herself; and spoke in a voice of tolerable firmness, although with difficulty, and with some hesitation:

“Herbert,” said the dying girl, “I have consented to this meeting for two reasons: first, that I may say a few words, which, as my dying words, you will long remember; and secondly, because I wish you should, for the future, think of me as I now am, rather than as your too tenacious memory has hitherto depicted me. Look at me, and tell me if, in these faded features, you recognize the woman you have so fatally, so constantly remembered!”

Herbert lifted his eyes, for the first time, to the face once so lovely and so full of life. He shuddered as he looked at features on which the impress of death was visible. She continued—

"We have both erred,—but you are guiltless as compared with me. I have your sorrows, your faults to answer for. I have not strength to (nor need I) remind you of my first weakness,—of that childish compliance with what I knew to be wrong, but which my ill-regulated mind had no power to protest against. I entered on duties I have never fulfilled; and, in blind obedience to unjust commands, I became a heartless, bad wife. It is true, I was married to a man most unfitted to have made me happy, under any circumstances;—but that I now feel to have been no excuse for me. Tired and dissatisfied with life, I yet repined at my illness, and feared to die. I returned home, and was found, in a blessed hour, by the admirable woman by whose side you are kneeling. She quickly discovered that disease of body was not the only disease under which I laboured;—she found me weak, querulous, perverse, and nursing feelings I now blush to remember. By slow degrees, she assumed that influence over me which nothing ever could have weakened, had my life been spared, and which has led me to the fountain of living waters,—which has smoothed my passage to the dreary grave,—and which has—oh, more than all—given me a hope beyond it!"—

Catherine here was so exhausted, as to be obliged to pause; and, having received some cordial from the hands of her old and faithful nurse, she thus proceeded:

"I have desired to see you less to tell you of my errors, than of the means by which I have been led to my deep repentance of them, in the fond, earnest hope, you too, my poor friend, may learn the lesson I

have learnt so late,—the lesson which teaches us how to suffer. Herbert," she said; "without that, we know nothing. There is only one book which teaches it; from that book I learned to feel as I have felt for some time past,—deep, grateful submission to the unerring hand which wounds us but to heal. Will you, oh! will you search in the little volume as I have searched? Will you, from that, learn to bear with patience the many trials to which you may yet be called? Will you try and redeem the precious hours we have both so fearfully, so fatally wasted? Tell me," she said, looking with intense anxiety on the sorrowing but deeply interested Herbert;—he pressed her hand in silence, but in token of his ready obedience to her wishes, and she took from before her a small Bible: "Take this," she continued, "and if my last words have any weight with you, read it, study it, make it, as I have done, (alas! so late), your nightly, daily companion; and we may, indeed, hope this parting is not a final one. I do not ask you to forget me: you will soon learn to think of me as your sister, as the friend of my beloved Gertrude, of her who has saved me from all we have most to dread, and to whom alone I owe the only pleasurable feelings I have known since we last met."

"Gertrude," said the now excited Catherine, "beloved Gertrude! let me see you once more; let me once more gaze on the face which I have so longed to see from day to day."

Gertrude raised her head, but the eyes of the sufferer were dimmed by the shades of fast approaching death.

"I cannot see you; but let me clasp the two hands

"I hope will one day be for ever united." As she said this, she placed the hand of her friend in the cold trembling hand of her lover. "Herbert! had I the wealth of the world to leave, I could give you nothing so precious as this little hand. One day you will think so; but my strength fails fearfully. I can scarcely see you; let me, then, bid you farewell, whilst I have power to utter the word."

"Catherine, my beloved Catherine!" said the weeping Herbert, "stay yet a little, I have much to say."

"Herbert, it is too late!" She raised herself for a moment, their lips met for the last time;—they met in death! The unfortunate and erring girl had ceased to suffer,—her purified spirit had returned to Him who gave it; and of the once beautiful Catherine Heathcote, nothing remained but the faded, wasted form.

Gertrude, ever composed and judicious, forgot her own grief in that of the broken-hearted man, for whom she felt, for the first time, a deep emotion of pity. She conducted him to another room, and advised his immediately returning to Elphinstone, whither she would follow, after assisting in the last duties now to be performed for her poor friend, and seeing Sir John Trevor, to whom she was anxious to communicate the events of the closing scene in the life of his wife. She despatched a messenger to —, requesting his instant return home, and, in feeling language, telling him of the sad occurrence of the last half-hour. The medical men had decided that their patient could not possibly survive many days, more than a week before the day on which she

breathed her last ; yet, as is ever the case, her death appeared very sudden ; and Sir John Trevor, in spite of his general disregard to appearances, was infinitely shocked to find that his poor wife had died whilst he was engaged in the duties of president of the annual festivities at ——. He had lost no time in entering his carriage ; and, during his solitary ride to Carleton, he looked back—not without self-reproach—on the short period of his married career, now so sadly ended. He remembered how he had received the fair hand of his bride from her ambitious father, rather than from herself ;—how little her visible reluctance had affected him ;—how selfishly he appropriated to himself the person of one whose heart he was indifferent as to gaining, and which, he moreover knew, had long been given to another. On his subsequent conduct he could look with greater satisfaction. He had redeemed all the promises given of splendour and indulgence ;—he had, at an enormous sacrifice of money and inclination, taken her, at her request, to the mild climate of Italy ;—every arrangement, both at home and abroad, had been made for her comfort and gratification ; but with all this, he had possessed no power to heal the broken heart of his victim ; and he could now only lament (as, indeed, he had long done) the selfish passions which destroyed the happiness of others, without contributing, in any degree, to his own.

He was met, on his entering the hall of Carleton, by Gertrude, who extended her hand to him, with that friendly feeling which is always to be found in scenes of sorrow, even between those who, in happier days, have neither felt nor evinced it. Gertrude,

however, had long been disposed to kindly sentiments towards the husband of her friend ; and, whilst she despised, with all her heart, his original cruelty towards Catherine Heathcote, she was tempted to pity him the severity of his punishment.

Sir John, though a libertine, was far from a cold-hearted or unkind man ; and he could have loved his wife with a better love than that with which he originally sought her ; but from extreme indifference, her manners had long since become insultingly cold ; and it was not until Gertrude's influence was felt, that she expressed a desire, or even willingly consented to see him. Their interviews then, were short and constrained, but free from that cold sarcasm which had deeply wounded him on former occasions. He felt he owed this change in her conduct to Miss Walcot, on whom he had long looked as on a superior being. He led her from the hall to a room in which lights were burning, and received from her the melancholy detail of the interview which had taken place between Lady Trevor and Captain Lyster, and of the probability of which he had been previously informed. He thanked Gertrude gratefully and repeatedly for all her kindness, —and for that more than kindness, which had so powerfully contributed to the comfort of the last days of the sufferer. On his expressing a wish to see her, he was conducted by Gertrude to the chamber of death. He gazed with a feeling of awe on the scene before him. There, on her marriage-bed, lay the dead body of his wife ! Her beauty, which had been nearly destroyed by illness, was now (as is often the case) strikingly and suddenly visible, under the

icy hand of death!—all was calm and placid;—and to one unaccustomed to such a sight, it was difficult to believe that the soul had really deserted its frail mansion. Sir John lifted one white hand;—oh, how coldly, how heavily, it rested in his! He pressed it to his lips; and, drawing off the emblem of their unhappy marriage, and placing it on his own finger, he knelt down, and shed the first tears he had shed since childhood, and learned a lesson by the side of that bed of death, which, we venture to predict, made him a wiser and a better man.

Gertrude returned home. She found Herbert had immediately sought his own room, without communicating to his sister the death of Lady Trevor. Gertrude was, therefore, surprised at finding her in the act of dressing for the ball at ——. On learning the sad story, all idea on her part, and on that of her husband, of going out, was given up. Lady Oakeley (who had never sacrificed any thing to feeling, and who placed no value on the “decencies of life,”) persevered in her intention of going to the ball, and of astonishing the ladies of —shire, by her magnificence and her impertinence.

CHAPTER XIX.

It has been said, that the actions of the real deep politician are never clear and straight-forward. Be this as it may, it is certain that the good and virtuous Duke of Belmont had a little tended to confirm this assertion, by the means he had taken to promote what now was the wish nearest his heart,—the marriage of his beloved child with the young and accomplished Marquis of Ellesmere. This young man had been, since leaving Cambridge, making what might really be termed a “classical tour;” so well had he profited by the many opportunities of acquiring classic lore, afforded by a journey through France and Italy. In the latter country, he had lingered far beyond the time he had originally intended;—indeed, so long as to give the Duke of Belmont cause for fear that the fair hand of the Lady Edith would be not only sought but yielded, before the traveller should have an opportunity of entering the lists.

To the brother-in-law of the Marquis, (Lord Graham,) he had alone confided his wishes, on the important subject of his daughter’s future establishment in life; and it was agreed between them, that whenever the time was really fixed for the return of the Marquis, Lady Edith should be urged to pay her long-promised visit to Deerhurst Castle; and that there, without suspicion on either side, the introduc-

tion should take place, which the anxious father fondly hoped might lead to an attachment between young people so apparently formed for each other;—both young, handsome, and nobly born,—and both possessing, in a marked degree, those peculiarly enthusiastic and liberal principles, which tended more than any thing else to render the connection between the two noble houses desirable, and which induced the Duke to believe that little doubt existed as to the ultimate result of an acquaintance so auspiciously begun. Politics, however, have nothing to do with the heart; and could it have been surmised by Lady Edith, that any motive had existed for her visit to Deerhurst, she would, much as she loved her father, have done all in her power to prevent a meeting, which had certainly been arranged in a manner contrary to all her pre-conceived notions of delicacy. But there was no other chance for her seeing (previously to the London winter) the man so desired by the duke as a son-in-law; and it was therefore all settled as we have detailed. Mrs. Halford had, as a matter of course, been made a party to the secret;—she had respectfully but firmly declared her disapprobation of the scheme; but having done that, her duty led her to acquiesce in keeping the secret, and of acceding to the duke's wish, that she would accompany her pupil to Deerhurst. Of their progress towards that place we have already spoken; and we must now join them there, and see how far the domestic politics of the Duke of Belmont are in the way of a favourable issue.

Lord and Lady Lucy Graham, though politically opposed to the noble house of Belmont, were too

much attached to it, and too sensible of the advantage of a closer connection with it, not to determine on promoting it in every way. They believed the political creed of the marquis too settled, to be changed by any marriage he might form, or by any other circumstance. He had occasionally heard of Lady Edith Clavering, but they had never met; he had rather shrunk from her, as hearing her spoken of as very clever, and one of the best female politicians of the day; and he fancied there was nothing he so much disliked, as a woman who interfered in politics: not that he had Lord de Lisle's instinctive dread of clever women, but he dreaded, beyond all things in the world, a female making herself conspicuous;—and the English papers, which he regularly received whilst abroad, contained on one occasion a tirade, somewhat severe, against young ladies appearing as politicians;—then gave an account of a scene at the window of the principal hotel, at ——. The name of the lady was withheld, but there was no mistaking the initials which were given,—and poor Lady Edith was pronounced, by the fastidious marquis, as a person of defective feelings and education; and a tale told at Deerhurst, by a gentleman staying there, on the mention of her expected arrival, confirmed him in his opinion.

The story related to a decided part she took one night at the Opera, after a division in the House on a question of great political importance, and on which she fancied she discovered much political dishonesty. She evinced her warm and rather angry feelings as a daughter; but the story did not tell this; and was of course given with considerable embellishment. It

tended to render Lady Edith, if not an object of dislike, at least of indifference to the Marquis of Ellesmere, and he heard of her expected arrival only to forget it.

Of the Marquis of Ellesmere, Lady Edith had heard little: she knew of course that he was the brother of her friend Lady Lucy Graham, and that his opinions, on certain subjects, were decidedly opposed to those of his family. They had not, however, deemed it necessary to quarrel with him on this subject; and it was with real delight that Lady Lucy informed her friend, on her arrival, that Alfred was not only once more in England, but actually at Deerhurst Castle,—that he was out shooting with some others of the party; and that Edith would really see this dear brother in two or three hours.

“If he be as good and accomplished, as he is liberal and enlightened, he must, indeed, be worth knowing,” said Edith, in answer to her friend’s delighted mention of her brother.

“Oh, as to his liberality, my dear democratic girl,” replied Lady Lucy, “I hope he has some greater virtues to recommend him than that, or I don’t know how he will succeed with the young ladies of less liberal principles, on this his first winter amongst them.”

Lady Edith laughingly assured Lady Lucy, the young ladies would very readily forgive his political delinquency, in consideration of his Marquisate; “and I conclude,” she added, “he is a miracle of beauty, this charming brother!”

“Ah, no! rather plain and ill made,” was the reply.

Lady Lucy being summoned down on the arrival

of some visitors, Lady Edith declared her intention of remaining in her ladyship's boudoir until the hour for dressing arrived. Her friend descended to the drawing-room; and Edith, in her little bonnet-cap, and still in her shawl, established herself on a sofa, and, for some time, read by fire-light. Finding that no longer practicable, she remained in her recumbent posture, reviewing the pleasant week she had passed at Elphinstone, and the valuable addition, to her somewhat confined list of *friends*, which she had made in the person of Gertrude Walcot. She thought of her beauty, her talents, and of her entire command of herself, which, on all occasions, she so greatly manifested. It was in this last particular,—this valuable quality,—that poor Edith felt her own deficiency. Scarcely a day passed in which her irritability did not lead her into error; not a night in which she had not some confession to make to her dear Mrs. Halford. Gertrude, on the contrary, maintained greater, or at least equal, dignity of character. She was never (let the provocation be what it would) betrayed into expressions of anger, or into those looks of extreme contempt by which Edith so often offended. With her it was necessary to like or admire, in order to be courteous. With Gertrude, it was different; without ever compromising her sincerity, she was invariably polite, and was never, by any provocation, betrayed into a word or look of which she afterwards repented.

In the midst of this fit of musing, the door opened, and some one entered, and immediately a cold hand (and that certainly not a lady's hand) was placed on the cheek of the fair occupant of the sofa.

"Why, Lucy, what a wretched fire you have! I dare say you have been asleep!"

These words were uttered in a tone of great good humour; but in a voice which Edith was certain never to have heard before. She started from her position with a precipitancy which convinced the intruder of his mistake; but without giving him the slightest idea of whose cheek it was to which he had so unceremoniously given the benefit of his cold hand. He, however, proceeded to apologize for his indiscretion, by assuring Edith he had been prepared to find Lady Lucy, who had generally been in her boudoir at that hour of the evening. He then succeeded in lighting the wax tapers which stood on the chimney-piece; and Edith saw before her a gentleman in a shooting dress, and decided at once it must be the Marquis of Ellesmere, rightly supposing that Lady Lucy's friends in general, were not in the habit of introducing themselves quite so familiarly into her presence. She took one of the lights, and simply assuring her companion she perfectly understood the mistake, she left the room, trusting to chance to find her own apartments.

The Marquis, for it was really no other, remained some time, hoping for the entrance of Lady Lucy to elucidate the mystery of the fair vision, whose beauty, transient as had been his view of it, appeared to him singularly striking. It never once occurred to him that the lovely blooming girl, with uncurled hair, partly confined under a cap of the simplest form and material, and whose manner was so confused as almost to border on *gaucherie*, could really be the high-born, haughty, the too-clever daughter of the Duke of

Belmont,—that same Lady Edith whose interference in a political dispute, and whose conduct at the Opera had so shocked him, as he read a detail of it in the public prints. He was destined to remain in ignorance yet a little longer. Lady Lucy returned not to her boudoir, and it was time he retreated to his dressing-room, longing for the moment when, in a more favourable light, he might see again the beautiful stranger, and again assure her of his sorrow for his unfortunate mistake. He had, too, a full share of his sex's curiosity to know who she was.

Lady Edith met a female attendant, who conducted her to the suite of apartments appropriated to herself and Mrs. Halford. She laughingly recounted her adventure, and declared her cheek still ached from the touch of the icy hand. "I conclude, of course, it must be the Marquis of Ellesmere, but I assure you I have not the most distant idea of what sort of person he is, so thoroughly was I frightened,—so glad was I to make my escape."

The friends laughed at the recital of Edith's distress, and they separated at the instigation of their women, who reminded them that a second bell had rung.

Edith's toilette completed, it would certainly have puzzled the Marquis to have recognized in her the wearer of the bonnet-cap. Gems of uncommon lustre shone in her hair, and her robe of white satin fell in undulating folds over her elegant figure. She was provoked, on entering the saloon of the castle, to find the room nearly filled with the numerous guests, who, at that season of the year, generally shared in the splendour and hospitality of Deerhurst: many of

them she had met in town,—some were strangers to her.

The Marquis had carefully watched the opening of the folding doors; and when they were thrown open to admit Mrs. Halford and Lady Edith, he doubted whether the splendid beauty he now saw were really the embarrassed girl in the travelling dress. Her beauty, however, had made too much impression on him to be so soon forgotten, short as had been the time allowed him to gaze on it, and as she walked up the room, he doubted whether he really admired her as much now as he had done an hour before.

Lord Graham, who knew nothing of their previous meeting, led the Marquis to Lady Edith, and introduced him to her. Instead of the reserve he had anticipated on the part of the lady, he was astonished to see her first laugh, and then say, "Oh, I have already had the honour of seeing the Marquis of Ellesmere!"

The recollection of their mutual surprise and awkwardness, and the absurdity of the scene altogether, appeared to her so ridiculous, that she laughed again, and with so much heartiness and good humour that the Marquis laughed too, leaving Lord Graham, and a stately lady by whom they were standing, in a state of perplexity.

Dinner was just then announced, and the Marquis conducted Lady Edith to the dining-hall. During the long period of dinner, the fair scion of the house of Belmont had ample opportunity of looking at the gentleman by whose side she was seated. His age was twenty-four, but he looked older; he was tall, and rather elegant in appearance, certainly very gen-

tlemanly. His countenance was full of sense and animation, but there was nothing particularly striking in his features: he talked a great deal, and very well. Their first odd meeting had been such as to leave no room for reserve even on the part of Lady Edith Clavering. They conversed on the general topics of the day,—of London,—the Opera at home and abroad, and of books. The Marquis was anxious to touch on the subject of politics, but this he had no opportunity of doing; as, unless a lady herself introduces it, it is the very last on which she is addressed. In a pause of their conversation, Lord James Sedley, who had a short time before been at Elphinstone, asked Lady Edith some questions relative to the guests they had met there, and then added,

“Your ladyship and Miss Walcot were great friends, if I remember right, on the first evening of your acquaintance?”

“Yes, and I hope we shall be so on every evening of our after-life. Miss Walcot is, without exception, the most charming person I ever saw,” was the reply of Lady Edith.

“In what way is she so very charming?” inquired Lord James.

“In every way. Did you ever see any one half so handsome, or so noble-looking, or a hundredth part so clever and amiable as Miss Walcot?” said the generous-hearted girl.

“She certainly is very handsome, but I have seen beauty I greatly prefer. There is something too much of the tragedy queen in her for my taste.”

“Is that the Miss Walcot who lives with Mrs. Elphinstone in the capacity of governess?” inquired

the Dowager Lady Leyton, who had been listening to a conversation carried on across the table.

By Mrs. Mainwaring she was answered in the affirmative, and asked, "Whether it was not quite without precedent, the fact of Mrs. Elphinstone introducing her governess to all her guests?" adding, "that it was the first instance of the kind she had ever known."

Lady Lucy Graham assented to the probability of such being the case, as she feared instances of liberality of sentiment were but too rare in England.

"Your ladyship approves, then, of the introduction of governesses into general society?" asked the dowager, in a tone of some surprise.

"As a principle, I do certainly," said Lady Lucy; "but I regret to observe, that a great change must take place before it can be generally adopted. I would have every lady, to whom our children are confided, such an one as rather graces than otherwise, the society to which she may be introduced.—I conclude, from what I hear, Miss Walcot is of this description."

"Indeed, she is," said Lady Edith, with affectionate energy. "I passed only ten days in the same house with her, but I never passed ten days so pleasantly, and it will be my own fault if I may not add, profitably. Oh! she is a noble example of the female virtues and graces."

"She certainly is very lovely, and all that," said Lord James; "but I still am not at my ease in her presence; one has somehow an instinctive horror of governesses. I think they are better in the school-room."

Lady Edith gave his lordship a look of such deep contempt, that Mrs. Halford, who had watched her through this scene, dreaded lest she should give utterance to her sentiments, and remarked, "that, much as liberality of sentiment had increased within the last few years, we must not expect the prejudice of ages to be done away with at once."

"No, nor ever, I fear, in this country," said the Marquis of Ellesmere; "however, on the subject now before us, it is, perhaps, a matter of minor importance, at least comparatively so."

"That remark clearly proves your lordship has not given the subject all the consideration it merits," said Lord Graham, "or I am sure you would not look on it as one of minor importance. I, on the contrary, as father of seven girls, am so deeply convinced of the importance of raising the situation of a governess,—of ameliorating, nay, of changing it altogether, that I think of it constantly, and am not without hope, from what I have recently heard, it may appear to others of equal consequence; and that, in the choice of a lady, who is to direct the minds and dispositions of their children, something will be looked to beyond mere accomplishment. I would have only a lady in my house,—well born,—soundly and religiously educated, and of manners, not only elegant but lady-like; and I would have the name of governess done away with altogether."

"But," said the honourable Mrs. Mainwaring, "where are we to find the treasure you describe? What lady of good birth would be paid for her services?"

"Many," answered Lord Graham: "look at our

professions; are they not filled by men whose daughters are well born, and often admirably educated; and is it not true, that they are constantly obliged to be paid for their services as governesses, and that too, after having moved in excellent society?"

"Very true," said Mrs. Mainwaring; "but admitting you meet with one of these said well-born young ladies, she will do nothing beyond instruct her pupils. I parted with Miss Hammond last week, because she refused to carry Louisa's bonnet, when the child was heated in her walk."

"And did you really require that she should do what so palpably was the province of the nursery maid? That same Miss Hammond is daughter to the late rector of Chalfont, and niece, on her mother's side, to the dean of ——."

"Very likely," said the honourable lady; "and as such, I expected her to do any thing for Louisa that might be required of her."

"Then, let me," observed Dr. Jameson (a gentleman, who, though silent, had been an attentive listener,) "advise you to replace Miss Hammond by one of those young persons who describe themselves in the columns of the 'Times,' as willing to make themselves 'generally useful.' No well-born lady will ever carry her pupil's bonnet." Lady Lucy arose from table just in time to prevent an angry rejoinder.

CHAPTER XX.

THE conversation was not resumed in the saloon; for Lady Lucy was the very rose and fashion of the neighbourhood in which the magnificent castle of Deerhurst was situated, and where she always passed eight months of the year. She did not content herself with mere precept in any thing; but by her own example in all that was good and excellent, enforced the precepts she gave. With respect to the subject just under discussion, she first assured herself of the merits of the ladies selected as the preceptresses of her daughter, and then omitted no opportunity of contributing to their comfort; and, as far as it was possible, to their amusement. A lady-like looking young woman rose on the entrance of the party from the dining-room, and was immediately introduced by Lady Lucy as Miss Manvers. She was known by many, and supposed by all to be the English governess of the beautiful and amiable children of Deerhurst. Her two eldest pupils were in the room with her; and whilst they treated her with affectionate respect, no appeal was made to her which in any way alluded to the situation she held: they looked on her in the character in which she was first introduced to them by their parents, as the friend who had kindly offered to take charge of their education, and to whom they were to look for all their pleasures

and indulgences. They saw her treated by Lord and Lady Lucy with respect and consideration, and it never, for a moment, occurred either to those sweet and happy children, or to any of the numerous domestics of the castle, to treat Miss Manvers or Madame Bernier, the French governess, in any other manner. The consequence of this admirable arrangement was, that the pupils and the governesses were engaged in one common cause, how best to promote their relative happiness and improvement. Lady Edith, warmed with the conversation she had just heard, seated herself by Miss Manvers, and by her own affability and unaffected good humour, set an excellent example to the rest of the party. She was certainly equal in rank to all and superior to most of those who still wondered at, and silently condemned the Deerhurst fashion of bringing forward the governess. Lady Edith and her very pleasing and sensible companion, amongst other subjects, talked of paintings; and it was agreed, they should adjourn to the picture-gallery, for the purpose of seeing a very fine Claude, which Miss Manvers was employed in copying. For that purpose they left the room together, and one of the ladies remarked, "It was a pity that Lady Edith affected so much singularity," adding, "for she is really a fine creature."

"May I be allowed to ask," gently inquired Mrs. Halford, "in what Lady Edith is singular?"

The great lady, though rather surprised at being addressed by a person whose name even she did not know, replied:—"Why, really I think her so generally singular, I cannot enumerate all the instances; but her defence, or rather her extreme admiration of

Mrs. Elphinstone's governess, and her equally strange notice of the young lady, with whom she has just quitted the room, may, I think, be quoted as singular."

"Oh!" said Lady Emily Maitland, gaily, "do not, my dear madam, libel our sex so much as to call Lady Edith's kindness and condescension singularities; but I suspect she has been a most lucky girl in her own school-room days. Is it not so, my dear madam?" she said, in tones of extreme sweetness, and turning as she spoke to Mrs. Halford. "I think I have the pleasure of addressing the early, the beloved friend of the sweet Lady Edith Clavering."

Mrs. Halford, sensibly affected by this kind and complimentary address, expressed the pleasure and delight she felt at any eulogium on the sweet woman whose virtues she had so carefully fostered, and whose trivial faults she had so sedulously laboured to correct.

"She is, indeed, worthy of all you can say of her," replied the amiable woman; "but I still cannot allow her to be singular. I believe there are many Lady Ediths."

"There would be, I dare say, if there were more Mrs. Halfords; but, until that is the case, I fear we must be content to witness pride and absurdity, in the higher ranks at least; and I believe, in that respect, we are pretty closely imitated by our inferiors,—as witness Mrs. Eton Montagu."

"I wish," said Lady Lucy, laughing, "Mrs. Eton Montagu could hear you speak of her as an 'inferior;'—but what has she done, to call forth your ladyship's ire?"

"Nothing worth repeating or remembering," replied Lady Emily; "but I never intend paying another visit to Wrexham. I could be well content with the homely and unaffected treatment of the mere farmhouse; but the affectation of grandeur I witnessed, when I last called at the vicarage, was quite ridiculous,—and that, too, in the wife of a clergyman, from whom we have a right to expect, at least, an example of humility."

"My dear sister," said Lady Lucy, "let our own example be worthy of imitation; let *us* practice humility, and I suspect we shall have less cause of complaint against our neighbours."

Groups of ladies were seen in different parts of the saloon:—one round the piano-forte, on which the little girls were performing;—one around a table, on which were scattered exquisite engravings. Lady Edith and Miss Manvers, who had returned from their visit to the picture-gallery, were intent on a game of chess: the marquis had entered some time before, and was earnestly watching the progress of a game scientifically played. He thought, as he looked, from time to time, on the countenance of Lady Edith, absorbed in her game, he had never seen any one half so beautiful; he forgot her devotion to politics; and, if the good Duke of Belmont could have read his heart that night, he would have been satisfied with the perusal.

Lady Emily Maitland was a younger sister of Lady Lucy Graham: she had not her ladyship's beauty, but all her amiability and warmth of heart. She strolled towards the chess party; and, seating herself by her brother, and linking her arm in his,

she inquired if he were taking a lesson at chess?— and then asked him, in a whisper, “If it were the game, or the player, that so fixed his attention?”

“The player,” he replied. “Is it possible this can be the Lady Edith, of whom I have heard so much?”

The marquis had intended this remark to be heard by his sister only; but the silence which ever reigns near a game of chess, really well played, rendered his words audible to the very ears it was most desirable should on that occasion be deaf.

Lady Edith looked up, with the queen in her hand, with which she had meditated considerable mischief. “Why does your lordship doubt it?” she asked, in a tone of some surprise.

The marquis hesitated; and not immediately answering,

Lady Emily said, “Ah! my brother is surprised to find you so quiet, and so like other people.”

“Have I, then, ever been represented to you as noisy, and unlike other people.”

“The latter, you have, certainly; and I have not said that it is not so. You must not attend to all my sister says.”

A lively conversation ensued, which put a speedy check-mate to the game; and the quartett broke up unwillingly, on being summoned to the music-room.

Lady Emily was a splendid performer, and, after delighting her audience by playing and singing, she called on Lady Edith to replace her at the instrument.

This Lady Edith declared her readiness to do; and added, “that after her friend’s beautiful playing, she dared not attempt any thing more difficult than a

set of quadrilles, to which, she hoped, they would not object to dance." Her proposition was gaily seconded, and two quadrilles speedily formed.

The Marquis of Ellesmere deemed it necessary to remain by the side of the fair musician, for the purpose of turning her leaves. On the first set being finished, he requested Lady Edith to give up her seat to some one else, and to honour him by dancing the next quadrille with him.

This she refused, stating her intention to play one more set, which she requested the marquis to dance with Miss Manvers, adding, "that if a third set should be danced, she should consider herself as engaged to his lordship."

With this proposal he readily and good-humouredly complied, and did not leave his pleasing and intelligent partner until he had secured her a substitute for himself in the next quadrille.

Lady Lucy took Lady Edith Clavering's place at the piano, and dancing was continued till long after midnight.

The fair daughter of the house of Belmont retired to rest, delighted with this first evening at Deerburch, and declared to Mrs. Halford, she had never seen a more pleasing, or more sensible person than the Marquis of Ellesmere. She had promised to accompany himself and his sister, Lady Emily, after breakfast the next day, through some of the lovely mountain scenery, on horseback: but she was too tired to talk, she said; and her heart whispered her she had been a very good girl, and had not one confession to make.

Mrs. Halford affectionately kissed her, and dis-

missed her to her bed ; but the heart of the amiable woman was heavy :—something told her that this visit to Deerhurst, so delightful in its commencement, would terminate less auspiciously. She had witnessed the evident admiration of the marquis for her beautiful child ; but, whilst she admitted his claims to all that was good, and talented, and gentlemanly, still she felt a secret conviction that he was not the man to create the passion of love in the bosom of Lady Edith :—she had acknowledged she thought him most pleasing and agreeable ; but Mrs. Halford felt assured there was a degree of romance in her, that would require far more striking and uncommon qualities than those possessed by the marquis ;—and well she knew, the main defect of her character (her adherence to her own opinion in trivial matters) would for ever operate against the slightest compromise in an affair of the heart. She inherited this from the duke, her father ; and he had, too, fostered it in his child ; and the probability was, he would be the first to feel its ill effects. Mrs. Halford, however, could do nothing more in the business than silently watch the progress of the scheme, (for so it must be called) which had been promoted by those deep politicians, the Duke of Belmont and Lord Graham.

To attempt to enumerate all the gaieties of this season at Deerhurst, is impossible ; it would occupy more time than I can devote to it. Hospitality and splendid elegance were the characteristics of the place. There was hunting and shooting for those who preferred such amusements to the society of beautiful women ; but they were few. And the mornings of a lovely January were usually devoted to

driving, riding, or walking; the evenings to music, dancing, or in gay discussions as to the next day's amusement.

A magnificent ball was to be given early in February, in celebration of the Marquis's return to England; and at this entertainment the Elphinstones were to be present, provided that Lord Lismore, now convalescent, had no relapse.

Lady Lucy Graham, although the very mirror of fashion, did not deem it necessary to seclude herself from her guests until reunited by the sound of the dinner bell.

In a house like Deerhurst, filled with guests, there must be some who will prefer the quiet of the drawing-room to the more fatiguing pleasures to be found out of doors. In the midst of these visitors the charming mistress of the castle was generally to be seen; and nothing could be more intellectual or more agreeable than the little coterie which was daily formed round her ladyship's work-table. Here she received morning visitors, and saw her beautiful children, who, when certain hours had passed, were ever welcome additions to the quiet circle left at home.

One morning, after Miss Manvers and her pupils had quitted the room, in order to visit the school over which they jointly presided in the village, Dr. Jameson, whom I have as yet very slightly introduced to my readers, laid down the book on which he had been engaged (Lamartine's beautiful account of his visit to the East), and addressing himself to the Honourable Mrs. Mainwaring, asked her what had become of the

young lady she had dismissed on her refusing to carry her pupil's bonnet?

Mrs. Mainwaring believed she had returned to the Deanery; but not having received any application as to character, &c. she could not possibly speak correctly on the subject.

"Nor is it necessary you should, my dear madam. I asked the question more to introduce a discussion in which, I am sure, I have heard you express sentiments you do not really acknowledge as your own. It is not a discussion for a dinner table, but here, where all must be interested listeners, and under the presidency of a lady whose own bright example must be my best apology, I shall not hesitate to renew a conversation abruptly broken some days since."

"If," said Lady Lucy, "you allude to the subject of governesses, no apology is necessary for introducing it here; it is one on which I am deeply interested, and having deviated, as I have done, in the matter of education, from the beaten track, I am exceedingly anxious to hear all that may be adduced for and against the different systems pursued by different people. The ladies who have charge of my daughters, as you see, mix with my guests, are my own companions when I am alone, and my children and servants have no feeling towards them but that of affection and of perfect respect."

"Your ladyship," said Mrs. Mainwaring, "differs widely in your plan from Lady Mulcaster, who is generally esteemed an extremely clever and very amiable woman; yet I heard her say, only a few days since, that her governess never, by any chance, leaves her

school-room, nor has ever been seated in her presence. I do not mean, however, that such an extreme is right; but, pardon me, if I say I think a medium might be adopted."

"No, madam," said Dr. Jameson, "no medium; it admits of none. Either let the governess, as she is called, be the friend and companion of the individuals with whom she resides, or let her be condemned to carry her pupils' bonnets! There should be,—there can be, no medium between the elegant and enlightened friend, and that species of upper nursemaid, into which you sought to degrade a lady equal in birth to any one of us."

"I cannot admit this," said Mrs. Mainwaring, provoked at this second allusion to her treatment of Miss Hammond; "a governess may surely be a lady, and yet not refuse to perform an office of kindness for her pupils. She is well paid for all she does."

"The very reason why she is asked to do it, and why she is to refuse. It is the miserable fact that she is paid, which ought to induce her firmly, but respectfully, to withstand any attempt on the part of her employers to enforce on her any office not absolutely connected with those superior acquirements for which they engaged her; and that same fact will ever operate on a liberal mind in producing the most delicate consideration. Why, my dear madam, you would be ashamed to make it part of your agreement with her, that she would dress, or perform any other office, for your children; and why is it to be imposed on her afterwards?"

"Very well," said Mrs. Mainwaring; "admitting I was wrong in my demand on Miss Hammond, I must

still differ from her ladyship in thinking the plan of introducing the governess to one's guests so highly desirable: people don't like it, they are apt to feel themselves rather too familiarly treated by this introduction."

"I will provide for those fastidious personages presently," said the doctor. "The advantages to the 'governess,' as you persist in calling her, are these; it rescues her from a grievous solitude, and brings her occasionally into that society to which she has probably been accustomed, and it keeps up in her that elegance of manner so necessary in one who is to be the principal instrument in forming the minds and manners of her pupils. Then, how can children and servants feel that respect for her, so essentially necessary, if they see her confined to her room, whilst all others are admitted to the passing scene, either of gaiety or domestic comfort? The inference will naturally be, that she is unfit for them. As this treatment affects the visitors at a house where this system of liberality is pursued, I would advise them, if they feel themselves aggrieved by coming in contact with a lady-like and highly-accomplished young woman (for, remember, I would admit no others),—I would, I say, advise them to refrain from visiting there altogether. In the middle ranks of society, there may be some objection to Lady Lucy's system; but there are intolerable abuses respecting governesses in that rank, and I only hope that with their love of imitating all that is above them, they will, with a few more bright examples, soon correct them, and introduce a better system,—one in accordance with their means and situations, and which will materially relieve the

miseries of the school-room. How does Lady Mulcaster's plan operate? We have seen the effect of the opposite one in this house. We see Miss Manvers, year after year, beloved and respected, and happy: the children models of talent, elegance, and goodness. What is the reverse side of the picture? Is it not this: a constant change of governesses,—children rude and only half educated, and the necessity of having recourse, at last, to a low-born person, who submits to ill treatment because she is paid for it?"

"Why, I must say, the children at Hadley are dreadfully rude and disagreeable. Lady Mulcaster told me she had five governesses last year; and had taken one at a lower salary, and not so very high in ideas."

"No, I'll be bound," said the doctor; "some accommodating person at sixty pounds a-year. Then, again, on the subject of salary. How common a thing is it for a man to object to a high salary for the lady who is to take on herself the charge of his children's temporal and eternal welfare, and to give three hundred a-year to his cook, or a similar sum for a hunter.—But that bell tells us the flight of time. Have I, my dear Mrs. Mainwaring, made one effectual appeal to your heart? For I suspect it is not that which condemns liberality and kindness, but the fear of the world,—that dread of 'Mrs. Grundy,' felt alike by the great and the little. Am I not right?"

Mrs. Mainwaring admitted she was persuaded to think seriously on the subject, though not yet quite convinced.

The sound of mirth and pleasure was soon followed by the entrance of fair ladies in riding habits, and

others in fur cloaks ; all equally delighted with the charms of a long excursion to some fine ruins in the neighbourhood. After a confused description of their adventures, the parties retired to their respective toilets.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE day of the ball at length came, and found the Marquis devoted to Lady Edith. She received his undivided attention as her due, and saw nothing at all extraordinary in it. Indeed, it is only to the deeply interested observer, that the homage of the heart is at first distinguished from the common evidences of politeness or mere admiration. Lady Edith was *not* deeply interested ; she thought the Marquis of Ellesmere singularly agreeable, more so, perhaps, than any one else at Deerhurst ; but she had seen men in town and elsewhere she preferred. The Marquis was clever and gentlemanly, so were most of the men she was in the habit of meeting ; but there was nothing in him to touch her happy heart. Rank and fortune had no peculiar charms for Lady Edith ; she possessed them already. Neither did she desire to be married for the mere sake of being married. She had ample liberty, and as the daughter of the Duke of

Belmont, was of as much importance as she could ever be as the wife of any man. No, she certainly never had seen the man she could love. But "cupid is a child of conscience;" and it may fairly be supposed the time will come when in the person of the lovely Lady Edith Clavering he will "make restitution."

Numerous parties had arrived, and continued to arrive; and Lady Edith, who had anxiously watched every carriage as it sounded and approached, at last beheld the bright liveries and well-appointed travelling chariot-and-four of the Honourable Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone. She was the first to add her affectionate greeting to Lady Lucy's welcome; and after many inquiries as to the health of the children, of Captain Lyster, &c., she went to her own room to read a letter from Miss Walcot, just delivered to her by Mrs. Elphinstone; it was as follows:—

"Your wish to hear from me, my dear Lady Edith, is too flattering not to be immediately complied with, although of the mere detail of our proceedings, you will doubtless hear from Mrs. Elphinstone; and of myself I have little to say. My anxiety on the subject of Lady Trevor was no sooner removed, by seeing her mind such as the mind of a dying woman should be, than I found my health drooping, and since the last sad scenes at Carleton, I have been a mere fine lady, confined principally to the sofa. We have been perfectly quiet here since the departure of the Countess of Oakeley and her family. Captain Lyster is gone, too, first to town, and then, I imagine, to endeavour to dissipate sad recollections under the

brighter skies of France and Italy. I trust, his late trial at the death-bed of his early friend, has sent him forth a wiser man, and more disposed to exert those fine talents I am sure he possesses, and which the present state of his father, Sir Charles, is so likely to render essential to his future respectability. It was bad enough to yield to morbid sensibility, as *Mr. Lyster*,—as an influential baronet, it will be preposterous, and deeply mortifying to his best friends. The little *Howards* are daily gaining ground in all our hearts: they are lovely affectionate children, and not deficient, though very inferior to their cousins. I am aware of your extreme dislike to Lord de Lisle. I did not suppose him so very disagreeable, but it is long since I saw much of him. Our journey into Gloucestershire must depend on yourself. I am ready to depart whenever it may best suit your ladyship. I had a letter from Lady Mary Poyntz last week; she speaks of the return of her son with delight,—I must leave you to form your own opinion on him, but do not suffer political prejudice to make you quite so severe and sweeping in your condemnations. Mr. Poyntz certainly is a most decided tory, so is Lord Graham, so is your favourite Mr. Elphinstone. I must still differ from you, dear Lady Edith, in thinking females have any right to interfere in what it requires a long course of study and observation to understand: it sometimes occurs to me, that you will marry a tory, and of course become one yourself; for you will not so detract from your own judgment as to doubt your husband's, on all matters of importance. ‘*Nous verrons.*’”

A few more lines concluded Gertrude's letter; her fair correspondent absolutely ridiculed the idea of supposing it possible she ever could tolerate, still less marry a man of not similar political principles to those entertained by her father. She did not believe her friend really thought so; it was only to try her, perhaps to tease her a little; but Gertrude had no talent for teasing, and she did think Lady Edith, the "terrible whig," as she had been called, would marry a tory.

The preparations for the ball were on a magnificent scale, worthy of the princely fortune and hospitable munificence of the Lord and Lady of Deerhurst Castle. Two of the male characters only, depicted in this book, are sketched, or attempted to be sketched, from real life; of these, one is Lord Graham. Mine is a feeble pen, and I doubt I shall have poorly portrayed his lordship, when I have, to the best of my ability, spoken of his public honesty, his private virtues, his exquisitely urbane and polished manners, in public as in domestic life. I venture to hold him up as a model of all an English nobleman should be, whilst, in the person of Lady Lucy, I delight to point out a pattern for wives and mothers. These are the people who make us love the aristocracy, and when the author of "Thoughts on the Aristocracy," wrote his waspish and illiberal pamphlet, he had never been in the neighbourhood of Deerhurst Castle.

Lord and Lady Lucy Graham, with true English politeness, were ready to receive all their guests on their entrance, instead of rendering it necessary to be sought by them through a suite of crowded rooms.

The ball was opened, with the sociable country dance, led off by Lord Graham and Mrs. Elphinstone, followed by Lady Edith and the Marquis of Ellesmere. Fanny, splendidly attired, and animated, and happy, yielded to no one in loveliness and grace; the great magnet of attraction, however, was the Lady Edith. Quadrilles and all the fashionable dances of the day succeeded the country dance, and her fair hand was in constant requisition. During the performance of the third dance, Lord Graham was called from the ball-room to receive an unexpected visitor, who had just arrived. After some time, which may be supposed to have been spent in the duties of the toilet, his lordship returned to the room, accompanied by a gentleman of middle age, of noble appearance, and with a countenance beaming with sense and goodness. They rested for a moment at the door, and looked towards the dancers. Lord Graham pointed to a group, in which were seen Lady Edith and the Marquis, gaily playing their part in the happy scene: the stranger fixed his eyes with intense and evident interest on the noble couple I have just named;—the dance ended. Lady Edith was led by her partner towards the door, in order to seek a cooler atmosphere in another room: she looked at the newly arrived guest for a moment with doubt and surprise; it was only for a moment,—the next saw her in the arms of her father.

I have called the duke an unexpected guest; in fact, he was so: he had written to Lord Graham, stating the possibility of his being at Deerhurst Castle on the night of the ball; but, as all depended on his being released from Brighton, whither he had been

ordered by the higher powers, there appeared little chance of his joining the festive throng. He was anxious to see his child, and more especially to see the man he had so long desired as his son-in-law, and whom he had not seen for some years. After the first happy meeting with Lady Edith, he mingled with the company; to many he was well known, to all he was an object of deep interest,—all desired to see a nobleman so distinguished for his private virtues, so famous for the soundness and consistency of his public principles, which, though not according exactly with the opinions of the majority of the guests assembled this night at Deerhurst, were still admired for their uncompromising honesty and inflexibility. After conversing with Lady Lucy on the splendour of the scene before them, the beauty of the women, and listening with all a father's fond pride to encomiums on his lovely daughter, he sought Mrs. Halford, and seating himself with her on a small sofa, apart from the rest of the party, he talked of Lady Edith and the marquis, and requested to have Mrs. Halford's real opinion of that gentleman. She expressed herself with considerable warmth on the subject of his good qualities. She spoke, indeed, with unusual animation of his talents, his high sense of honour, and of his elegant and gentlemanly manners: the duke hoped Mrs. Halford would have said something of how matters were progressing between the young people; but finding her silent when she had given her opinion of the marquis, he said, "And Lady Edith, my daughter, is she sensible of the merits of a man who is described by you, my dear madam,—by all, as so superior to the present race of men in his ex-

alted rank? Tell me, are my hopes on this subject likely to be soon realized?" Mrs. Halford had read with accuracy the state of her pupil's heart: all there was calm and at peace; none of the turbulence, none of the disquiets of love were there; of the feelings of the marquis towards Lady Edith, she was also equally well-informed. No doubt existed that the admiration he at first felt for her, was daily, hourly ripening into love. She would gladly have been spared giving her opinion on this delicate subject to the duke; but, as he required it of her, she gave it with her usual candour, and avowed her belief, that whilst Lady Edith felt pleased with the attentions of the marquis, as coming from a man of distinguished manners and character, no feeling of a warmer nature, had ever for a moment entered her bosom. "And the marquis," said the anxious father, "are his attentions only such as he pays to every beautiful girl of my daughter's rank?" Mrs. Halford believed the marquis was daily becoming more attached to the Lady Edith, but that three weeks was too short a time either to raise completely, or effectually to crush all hope: she might be mistaken as to the ultimate result of their acquaintance.

"You must, my dear madam, you must be mistaken; my daughter cannot remain blind to the eligibility of such a connection."

Mrs. Halford made no reply; but she well knew that eligibility was the very last thing that would be considered by her darling Edith. The duke felt the necessity of saying no more now on this subject; and, telling Mrs. Halford he should request permission to wait on her on the following morning, he

sought Mrs. Elphinstone. This lady had ever been a great favourite with him; and though she had not, perhaps, so much of character as he thought essential to her sex, yet she was so gentle, so perfectly correct, and withal, so pretty, that there were few (if any) ladies with whom he liked so well to converse. It was long since he had seen her, and he found her as Lady Edith had represented her, "as the most improved person he had ever seen,—quite charming."

"My daughter laments the fact of your never visiting London, my dear madam. To what cause are we to attribute this privation?"

"When," replied Mrs. Elphinstone, smiling, "I first inflicted this privation on a London world, it was (if the truth must be told) because my husband would not let me go. Now the case is altered;—I no longer wish to go; I find a thousand charms at home, during those loveliest of all lovely months which constitute a London winter. Mr. Elphinstone is there of necessity, very often, though not so often, I believe, as he ought to be."

"The last time I saw him in town, it was to attend a division of the House of Commons; and if I know any thing of the constituency of —, his vote on that occasion gave some offence."

"So much," answered Fanny, "that I am not without hopes he may give up politics altogether. He certainly will, if it be necessary to sacrifice his principles to them."

After some general remarks, the duke expressed his pleasure that there was a chance of seeing Mrs. Elphinstone and her whole family at Belmont, in the

summer; and not feeling particularly elated by his conversation with Mrs. Halford, he quietly left the scene of gaiety, and retired to his own room. Here rest awaited him not;—he had set his heart, built his fondest hopes, on the marriage of his daughter with the Marquis of Ellesmere; and all seemed on the very point of falling to the ground.

Mrs. Halford had not said much; but the little she had said impressed him deeply: no one's penetration was so acute as hers; no one so thoroughly knew every thought and feeling of Lady Edith's heart as she did. The fact, however, of his daughter not eventually yielding to his wishes, on the subject of her settlement in life, never entered his head. The duke knew a great deal of men,—of the world in general; but of the intricacies of a woman's mind,—of the firmness of her resolution in affairs of the heart, he knew literally nothing. His own sweet wife became his, in compliance with her father's wishes, and because it was deemed an eligible match; but her bringing up had been altogether different to that her child afterwards received. She had never been taught to reason on the fitness of things,—to decide for herself in matters of importance; and, when told by her father to receive the Duke of Belmont as her future husband, she would as soon have refused to acknowledge her belief in divine truths, as obedience to her father's commands. The result justified the means;—she was, for one year, an exquisitely happy wife. With Lady Edith it was far different; she was early taught to believe herself an accountable being, to think and act for herself. Her father disliked what he called indecision of character in a woman;

and he certainly had no reason to complain of it in his child; and her life had been so serene and pleasant,—so completely one long summer day of happiness; so little had she been thwarted, that it yet remained to prove how very apt a scholar she had been:—but she did prove it, and that, too, when least it was expected, and when it most grieved her to evince it,—in opposition to her father's fondest wishes.

The grey light of a February morning had peeped through the painted windows of the Castle, ere the sounds of revelry had ceased in its halls. There were some who, in pressing a *late*, pressed an uneasy pillow. Mrs. Halford had seen her lovely pupil retire from the gay scene, with a heart as light and as apparently untouched as in her days of early childhood. Well she foresaw the disappointment awaiting the Duke, and she dreaded the collision of two tempers so firm and so unbending as those of the father and daughter. She dreaded, also, her interview with the former; she could give him little hope of the accomplishment of his wishes, and she had long since decided never to use the slightest influence with Lady Edith, in an affair so entirely her own.

The Marquis of Ellesmere, in loving for the first time, felt that, at the end of three weeks, he loved with all the heart's devotion:—of his probable success with his fair enslaver, he had scarcely dared to think. He reviewed, with all a lover's accuracy, the events of each day that had passed since his first meeting Lady Edith, in his sister's boudoir: that review, whilst it afforded him no particular reason for despair, certainly failed to inspire him with any very great

degree of hope. He saw the fair girl surrounded with admirers, and he at length confessed to himself that he had no reason to believe she had evinced any marked preference of himself, beyond that of selecting him for her guide in her mountain rides. With all this conflict of hopes, doubts, and fears, the Marquis endeavoured to compose himself to a few hours of rest: how he succeeded I know not; but at noon he had joined the Duke and his daughter on the terrace, where, before entering the breakfast-room, they were enjoying the warmth of a February sun, which was shining with all the brightness so peculiar to that season of the year.

Lady Edith had been talking in gay and careless tones of the pleasures of Deerhurst; of the particularly well-selected party assembled there, and of the progress she had made in horsemanship, under the guidance of the Marquis of Ellesmere.

"The Marquis appears a pleasant and gentlemanly man," said the Duke, when his daughter paused in her enumeration of the delights of her visit to his excellent friends, Lord and Lady Lucy Graham.

"Yes, very; but not, I imagine, so talented as his sisters. Lady Emily is one of the cleverest young women I ever saw; and Lady Lucy has such fine sense,—so much conduct; I cannot fancy the Marquis will bring a great accession of strength to our party: but he does what is to me, just now, of more importance,—he teaches me to guide my horse *à merveille*."

"And which your groom, I imagine, would do just as well," said the Duke, with a very slight appearance of ill-humour, but inwardly provoked at his daughter's

cool notice of the Marquis, except as to his talent for guiding horses. "I trust you are mistaken as to his character, or rather his acquirements: he is a man to whom our party is looking up with considerable expectation."

"Yes, so I suppose:—well, I only hope he may not disappoint you; but I think him more deficient in conversation than I did at first;—he is, at any rate, more silent. He did nothing very brilliant at college, I believe."

"I scarcely know what you mean by 'very brilliant';—he certainly did not take a degree on which his bread depended, therefore not one of which much could be said; but Dr. Jameson told me, last night, no one at Cambridge ever passed his time at that University with greater credit and respectability,—with more honour to himself."

"Ah! that is just what I should believe of him;—he has reminded me, once or twice, of Lord Trelawney, whom you always said was so respectable. Do you not remember that poor, good, but dullest of all dull young men? He is, I hear, married to Miss Eyton, daughter to the great tory member for —; the very woman for him, I should think."

Luckily for Lady Edith, the Marquis appeared at the opposite end of the terrace, just in time to prevent the angry reply, which the Duke felt compelled to make, on his daughter's likening his admired lordship to one of the most stupid individuals breathing. The trio conversed for a few minutes, on the beauty of the scenery around them; and entered the Castle, on receiving an intimation that Lady Lucy had taken her place at the breakfast table.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE day was so lovely, that almost all the visitors were tempted out; and a very large party of pedestrians sallied forth: amongst them Lady Edith, all gaiety and beauty,—happily unconscious of the discussion going on between the two people she loved best on earth—her father and Mrs. Halford. The discussion ended, by the latter mildly and judiciously persuading the Duke to leave the affair so near his heart to chance; and she convinced him, also, the subject was one, perhaps the only one, on which his fair daughter would not admit advice, or even argument. On withdrawing to the library, the Duke was pleased to find the Marquis alone: they conversed long on topics of deep interest to both; but there was another still nearer the hearts of the politicians. Of this they spoke not; but the father arose from his chair, only on the entrance of Lady Edith from her walk. He was more than ever convinced that his companion was a man of real talent, and more than ever desirous he should become nearly connected with him, by a marriage with the fair and smiling girl, who now stood by his side.

The Marquis gazed at her with deep admiration, as she stood by her father, blooming from her long walk, and beaming with animation. She playfully

and earnestly entreated the Duke to prolong his stay beyond the morrow, which he had fixed on for his departure.

The Duke declared his inability to remain where he so much desired to be; adding, that important business in London obliged him to be there on the morning of the 11th. Then, turning to the Marquis, he offered him a seat in his carriage, if he were really serious in his intention of leaving Deerhurst.

"For a few days," he replied, "I really must go to town, and shall gladly accept the kind offer you make me."

"Then as you must go, my dear father," said Edith, "I rejoice the Marquis will be your companion. A solitary drive of two hundred miles is not desirable."

There was nothing very flattering to the hopes of either the father or the lover in this speech of Lady Edith; but she directly added, turning to the Marquis, "I hope, however, your lordship intends soon to return. My day for leaving Deerhurst is drawing very near, and I would fain profit by your experience, and make still further progress in *equitation*."

The Marquis signified his intention of remaining only two days in London, and expressed infinite pleasure at the prospect of a renewal of their morning rides.

The party at dinner that day was a large one, and well selected; but every body was tired, and more than one dull, and disinclined to conversation. It required all the urbanity and attentive politeness of the host and hostess,—all the unfailing liveliness of Lady Emily Maitland, to preserve a tolerable degree of ani-

mation. The gentlemen joined the ladies very early. Miss Manvers and Lady Edith played and sung, but nobody listened. There was a laughing flirtation between Lady Emily and Lord James Sedley,—one or two serious ones, begun the night before, and happily progressing now, between other honourable lords and ladies,—a political trio,—a chess party, and a very sleepy party on more than one sofa. The dowager Duchess of Belton arose unusually early from her customary game of picquet, and set the good example of making up the loss of rest on the preceding night. Her example was gladly followed, and by midnight the inhabitants of the castle had sought refuge from their cares, real or imaginary, in the blessing of sleep.

The travelling carriage of the Duke of Belmont waited at the principal entrance of the castle on the morning that was to witness his departure with the Marquis of Ellesmere from Deerhurst. Early as was the hour agreed on for breakfast, the Lady Edith was ready to receive her beloved parent on his appearing at the breakfast table. Lord and Lady Lucy, too, with Lady Emily Maitland, fearless of the long morning that awaited them, were partakers of the early dejeuner destined for the travellers. The Marquis was the last who made his appearance; he looked pale and dis-spirited, and called forth all the raillery of his lively sister on his woe-begone looks.

“Now, really, Alfred,” she said, “you look as if you were quitting this enchanted castle never more to re-enter it, leaving your ladye-love behind you! Come, tell me,” she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, “who is the enchantress?—who has kept you waking the

live long night with the force of her spells? Is it Marion Gray, or Lady Jane Leslie, or pretty, good-natured Mrs. Henry Carew?"

The Marquis laughed; but his sister's remarks bordered too much on truth. He did really feel a heaviness, even to himself unaccountable, at quitting Deerhurst; and the spells of the enchantress had been indeed around him, and had disturbed or nearly scared away "tired nature's sweet restorer." He, however, returned a laughing answer to his sister's remark, assuring her she had not guessed right as to the cause of his grave looks.

The Duke changed the conversation by asking Lady Emily under whose auspices she purposed visiting town?

"Oh!" she replied, "since Lady Lucy gives me up, I naturally enough turn to my brother, and trust to his introducing me to a Marchioness of Ellesmere before April. Do you hear, Alfred?" she said.

"Yes," returned her brother, gravely; "but you give me so short a notice of your reliance on me that, I fear, you must look elsewhere for a chaperon."

"Then let it be in Grosvenor Square," said the Duke; "and with my daughter, and under the care of my good sister Lady Catherine Bingham; let me hope I may have the pleasure of seeing you partaking the delights of London, as Lady Grace says, 'soberly.'"

The invitation was readily accepted, and it was settled that the Marquis should escort his sister to town in the beginning of April, when Lady Edith Clavering would have rejoined her family in Grosvenor Square.

Lady Edith threw her arms round her father's neck as she saw him rising to depart. He tenderly embraced this darling of his heart; and at their next sad and tearful meeting, remembered this parting at Deerhurst.

The Marquis bade adieu to his sisters, and on shaking hands with Lady Emily, she placed the hand of her brother in that of Lady Edith, saying, "Do, my dear, good girl, take such a farewell of this Knight of the Rueful Countenance, as shall make him some amends for leaving this enchanted castle."

Lady Edith turned her smiling eyes on the Marquis, and, holding out her hand, she said, "Make haste back, or I shall forget all your lessons."

He took her offered hand; but the one that met it was cold as the one which, three weeks before, had pressed her fair cheek. He made no reply to her remark; and, relinquishing her hand, he descended the steps of the hall, and entering the carriage, was followed by the Duke, and in a few moments more they were out of sight of even the fond eyes which followed them.

The day proved very wet, and the ladies were condemned to the house. Some took their usual station in Lady Lucy's room: some adjourned to the library. Mrs. Elphinstone was delighted to enter, with Dr. Jameson, on the subject which now so deeply interested her,—education; the best mode to be pursued with regard to children, and the ladies appointed to the charge of them. She entered with him into a long discussion, and assured him she presented in her own person a striking example of the ill effects of inferior governesses; effects which had been slightly

averted within the last few months, by her happy fortune in having met with such a woman as Miss Walcot.

Lady Lucy warmly joined in the debate, and it was concluded between the three principal speakers, that until the race of governesses was raised to a distinction considerably above that it now enjoyed, and which change could only be effected by influential people, private education must not only be so defective as to render a school far preferable, but, from the unkindly feelings which do and must exist between the "governess" and the other members of a family, the years appropriated to the instruction of children, will be years of irksomeness and restraint to parents, and of long-enduring misery to the hapless female whose necessities oblige her to retain a situation in which she is wretched and degraded. The "governess" must no longer be looked on as an unavoidable evil, but as the greatest possible good; as the one thing necessary to the comfort and well-doing of a family.

But whilst the strenuous advocates of liberality decided what ought to be effected by themselves and others, they were equally aware that much rested with the governess herself. She must strictly adhere to the performance of those intellectual duties for which she was engaged, and for which she has probably been intended. No carrying of bonnets; no assisting the ladies'-maids.

"How is it," said a lady to a very clever friend of mine, whose fallen fortunes obliged her to enter a family as governess; "how is it, that amongst all those haughty and illiberal people, you have con-

trived to preserve to yourself such complete respect?"

"Because," replied my friend, "since I entered the house I never yet tied a string for my pupil, nor ceded, in the slightest degree, that attendance on myself to which I have as great a right as any one of the family."

After much more conversation, Mrs. Mainwaring, who had been an attentive listener, and who was far from a bad-hearted woman, declared herself a convert to the doctrine she had heard; and as the best proof she could give of her sincerity, announced her intention of immediately writing to her former governess, and requesting her to resume her duties under better auspices in her family.—So much for influence and example: would we could oftener witness their exertion in so good a cause!

Dinner parties, balls from home, both public and private, filled up the hours at Deerhurst. Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone had remained only one week. He was wanted in London; and the fond mother was now really anxious to see her children and the beloved friend to whom, in the persons of those children and in her own, she owed so much. The happy little creatures, no longer under restraint, or the fear of not being genteel and lady-like, on hearing the sound of the carriage, commenced a race down the stairs, and were only anxious who first should crowd into the arms of the sweet mother, or who first should tell the happy tale that "dear Miss Walcot" was much better. Nor was it her own children only Fanny pressed to her heart. Her poor little nieces felt the tenderest affection for her; and though last in the race with

their more robust cousins, were not the least overjoyed at the return of their "darling aunty."

Amongst other letters which awaited Mr. Elphinstone, was one bearing the Paris post mark; it was from Lord Frederick Howard. He wrote with intense anxiety on the subject of his poor children, gratefully acknowledged Elphinstone's and Fanny's kindness, of which he had heard from Herbert Lyster, who had passed through Paris the day preceding that on which he wrote. He attempted not to palliate his crime by a reference to his domestic cares, but expressed himself willing to return to his home, if a domestic wife and good mother would be persuaded to render that home what it ought to be; otherwise he saw no reason for a return to a country he had so disgracefully quitted. He alluded in severe but just terms, to a letter he had received from Lady Lyster, full of bitter invectives at his conduct. In it, she appeared to forget, that the delinquency she so vituperated, was first induced by the vain heartlessness of one of her darling children, and consummated by another of the victims of her wretched policy,—the cheap and too humble daughter of her *femme de chambre*.

To this letter Elphinstone replied, on reaching town. The accounts from Brighton were such as he felt he might place implicit reliance on, and which held out no hope on the part of the frivolous Julia of a return to, or rather of the assumption of the duties of a wife and mother. In addition to private information, the worst and most scandalous, but perhaps the most unfortunately correct paper of the day, gave (in initials not to be mistaken) details,

which, whilst too bad for publication, were sufficient evidence of the fast-failing virtue of this misguided woman. Still, that no means should be left untried to recall her from the wretched path she had chosen, Elphinstone wrote to her in feeling and forcible terms; represented to her the light in which she was now considered by the world, of which she was so fond, and after assuring her of her husband's deep regret for his conduct, he offered, if she would join him at Paris, to make such arrangements for their travelling abroad, as should detain them from England until their mutual errors were forgotten, when they might return and claim the lovely children, who, in the meantime, should find all a mother's watchful tenderness at Elphinstone. Julia read the letter, thought it would be very nice to go to Paris, and to travel; but, alas! it was too late. She was already on the edge of a fearful precipice;—from this she was too indolent, too weak to retreat, and in a few short weeks from the period of her receiving Elphinstone's letter, she added one more example of the unhappy consequences of a defective education; of an education in which the book most read, most deeply studied, was not the Book of Life! It is in vain to talk of precept and example; they are excellent in themselves, but they will not do alone. In the time of need, both may be forgotten, but divine truth imbibed and inculcated by a steady and constant perusal of the "Holy Book," once learnt, once inculcated, never can be forgotten. Julia Lyster had neither precept nor example, which it were not better to forget; and no truth (still less divine truth) ever fell on her ear. Her mind was left to the direc-

tion of a person of whom nothing was known, beyond the fact of her having educated the daughter of a duke, and that she was *not* a Catholic;—whether in lieu of the bigotry of catholicism she possessed any purer, better faith was never asked. Suffice it for Lady Lyster, her daughters did what other young ladies did; that they married rank and title. Having seen all this achieved, she pronounced herself, and actually believed herself to have been the best mother in the world: her system, the very best system in the world. The disgrace of her daughter, of her favourite Julia, being now publicly known, gave her the first uneasiness she had ever felt on her account; but the fact of the rapidly declining health of Sir Charles Lyster, which threatened by its consequences to deprive her of a large part of her present fortune and splendour, left no room in her narrow heart for much beyond selfish regret, that Lady Frederick Howard should have been so very silly,—so universally admired, so young and so beautiful as she was: her chief consolation was derived from her daughter, the Countess of Oakeley, the courted, splendid possessor of a coronet and thirty thousand a year! Of the good and amiable Fanny she seldom thought, never but to denounce her as imbecile beyond description. Captain Lyster she had long given up as absolutely hopeless.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"INDEED, Janet, I am getting very tired of this place; the people are so very wise and clever here, that unless one is as wise and clever, there is no chance of being noticed. I agree with Lady Lorimer, that but for their rank and influence, the Grahams would not be tolerated."

"No, as you say, ma'am, I never saw such a servant's hall; just as dull, as I dare say, you are up stairs. There was no such wise and clever people at Arlingford House this time last year, when we were there; and that nice pleasant Mr. Spencer Beresford, or Lord de Lisle, as I should say. Why, do you know, ma'am, the housekeeper here, told me that no gentleman ever got tipsy here; at least, none ever did in her memory, and she has been here fifteen years! I don't know what we should think of Arlingford House, without seeing tipsy gentlemen about sometimes. Is Lord de Lisle expected here, do you know, ma'am?"

"No, indeed, I am afraid not; he would render one's rides and drives pleasant. But what do you learn from Lady Edith's maid about him? He was at Elphinstone when they were there."

"Yes, ma'am, but I can get nothing out of her or the men servants; certainly, Lady Edith's own footman did tell me something, but it may not be true, so I won't repeat it."

"Yes, yes, let me hear what it is?"

"Well, ma'am, Mr. Price (Lady Edith's footman,) did certainly say, that Lord de Lisle was particular attentive to a lady at Elphinstone,—a Miss Walcot, I think, he called her."

"Miss Walcot, why that is the name of Mrs. Elphinstone's governess,—he never could be such a fool!"

"The 'governess!' well, if ever I heard such a thing; but I remember his saying, that the governess, in their family, was quite a lady, and was always with Mrs. Elphinstone, just as Miss Manvers and the French lady are here."

"Yes; the absurdity of introducing the governess to every body. I am sure the school-room is a better place for her."

"Yes, indeed, ma'am; I am sure my sister never sits in the drawing-room."

"Your sister, and pray who is she?"

"Oh! ma'am, she is governess in a family in Russell Square, and very clever she is,—understands all the dead tongues, German, Portuguese, and—"

"Yes, I dare say,—but you are making me a fright with that seigné. Let me have flowers to-day."

This conversation, if such it may be called, passed between a girl of rare and exquisite beauty and her second-rate maid; for there are degrees of rank even in ladies' maids. The scene would have formed a beautiful subject for a painter. The fair image of the girl reflected in the glass; the characteristic pertness and smartness of the Abigail, and the several signs which exhibited the idleness and the untidiness of the lovely occupant of the dressing-room.

Marion Gray, for such was the name of the young lady, had long been celebrated in —shire for her beauty. Well-born, but imperfectly educated, much of her time had been passed with her brother, and in the society of idle young men of fashion; and Janet's remarks on Arlingford House, the name of the brother's seat, were singularly correct. Nothing very wise or very clever *did* disturb the gaiety of its late dinners, or the ease and freedom of its morning coteries; and certainly sobriety was not the cardinal virtue of Arlingford House. It was there the lovely Marion reigned supreme,—the idol of the men. She was with some faults endued with many virtues: she was sweet tempered, and, with her surpassing beauty, singularly unaffected; yet Marion Gray was unmarried,—as yet, unsought in marriage. She was exactly one of those persons who, with a judicious mother, would have been a delightful woman. She was now on a visit, for the first time, to Deerhurst; and, as she hated restraint of every kind, the termination of a month found her wearied to death with the propriety and elegance of a house under the dominion of such a woman as Lady Lucy Graham.

She had been invited there chiefly from political motives, and was quite unknown to every one of the guests. All looked at her with admiration. The gentlemen wondered who she was: the ladies of a certain age pitied her apparently unprotected state; whilst the young ones, finding her disinclined to their society in general, and quite incompetent to enter into their various elegant pursuits, left her very much to herself. Thus, with the exception of the hours passed on horseback (for she rode remarkably well), Marion

Gray sought refuge in her own room; and in the society of Janet found some relief for the absence of persons more congenial to her ill-regulated mind. The beau-ideal of her imagination was Lord de Lisle. He had passed some weeks at Arlingford House; and in whatever light he might appear among the élite of Elphinstone, he was there a very charming person, and the only man of any respectability, or who, when sober, had paid marked attention to the beautiful Marion; and although very superior to the men she was accustomed to see, he was not so very clever as to frighten away the loves and graces, and he had succeeded in making an impression on her young heart that it had never before received. Rumours had reached her of his attachment to some other lady, but she alone knew the extent of his devotion to her; she felt what it *ought* to portend; and, restless and weary, she listened to every mention of his name with intense interest, and was surprised to find it alluded to so seldom by people, many of whom had recently been in the very house with him. No man so completely contradicted the assertion, that "a man is not a prophet in his own country," as Lord de Lisle; he was one no where else. And even in his own immediate neighbourhood, there were those who doubted the purity of Marion Gray's love, and who felt inclined to believe that his lordship's title, and his beautiful seat in ——shire, lent their charms to his personal merits. But it was not so: she really did prefer Lord de Lisle to every other man. He was just wise enough to escape the imputation of being silly, and not so wise as to detect, or, at any rate, to be annoyed at want of wisdom in his wife. He had flirted, nay,

more than flirted, with the sister of his friend Sir Charles Gray; at first without any very definite idea of what he meant or wished. His unexpected rencontre with Gertrude Walcot at Elphinstone entirely dissipated the image of his prettier friend at Arlingford. But the decided and somewhat contemptuous rejection he received from the high-minded and intellectual Gertrude, together with hints he had the sense to take, that his place was not amongst clever women, sent him back to his own house with an indistinct sort of resolution in his mind to substitute the extreme of beauty for the perfection of sense and elegance: tolerably convinced, it were better to marry a woman rather inferior to himself than otherwise, and instead of being very proud of his wife's mind, have the pride of possessing the prettiest wife in —shire.

"What is become of that sleepy Lord de Lisle we left at Elphinstone?" said Lord James Sedley to Mrs. Spencer, one day at dinner. "Is he gone to hunt foxes to his heart's content? for it is, I think, the only thing he can do."

"It is what he does very often certainly," said Lord Graham, who had heard the question; "but it is not the only thing he does."

"Then what are his lordship's pursuits?" inquired Lady Edith; "I certainly never saw him with a book or a pen in his hand, even on those days when frost and snow alike prevented hunting or walking."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Lord Graham; "but he is a very different person in his own neighbourhood. There he is so universally liked, and looked up to, that he is in constant requisition as a mediator or an

arbitrator. He is, besides, an active and excellent landlord."

"Well, I can imagine all that," said Lady Edith; "but at Elphinstone there was so little room for the exercise of the virtues you have named, that your lordship must allow we might venture to pronounce him rather dull. I never looked at him without every line in the Dunciad coming to my memory!"

"Your ladyship is very severe," gently remarked Mrs. Halford, vexed at her pupil's sarcasm; "you must not forget that your own particular cause of anger against Lord de Lisle, lends false colours to the light in which you regard him."

"Oh! you mean in the affair of the bracelet! My dear madam, you are putting into my hands fresh weapons wherewith to fight against your friend. Yes, I pronounce him the rudest as well as the dullest of men!"

Lady Edith then turned to Lady Emily, and told the story of the bracelet with considerable humour, and of the loss of his lordship's sovereigns on the occasion; and concluded by adding, "But gentle dulness ever loves a joke!"

"I think, if I mistake not," said Mrs. Halford, turning to Marion Gray, "you are extremely well acquainted with Lord de Lisle, Miss Gray?"

"I am intimately acquainted with him," was the laconic reply.

Lady Lucy proposed an adjournment to the saloon; and the instant Lady Edith found herself there with Marion Gray, she went to her, and, in terms of much feeling and kindness, expressed her great regret at the thoughtlessness which had led her to comment so

unreservedly on any person, particularly on an individual she found, too late, was the friend of one of the assembled party.

The good-natured girl readily accepted the apology offered by Lady Edith; adding, "My brother has long known Lord de Lisle, and he is his most intimate friend." She could have added, "and to me he is much more!" but she felt it in a greater degree now that she had heard him thus attacked. She continued, "but we must not expect to find all the world thinking as we do of our acquaintance; and I am aware Lord de Lisle does not always do himself justice."

The most severe reproof would have had less effect on Lady Edith than this sweetness and good-humour on the part of one she had rather despised than otherwise. She felt, at this moment, that not all her rank, fortune, or talent, could compensate for the want of that amiability which was now so conspicuous in Marion Gray. She felt, too, how differently Gertrude Walcot, whom she much wished to resemble, would have acted; she must certainly have condemned that sarcastic detail, which, in the very cleverest women, so often degenerates into flippancy.

Of all talents (admitting it deserve the name of talent) the one to be dreaded and condemned, is that faculty which leads people, without actually deviating from the truth, so to relate an event, as shall give to it an absurdity which, in ordinary language, it would not have had. Those who indulge in it are greatly mistaken in supposing it any evidence of cleverness. Two of the most inferior persons I have ever known, were indisputably the best relaters of a story: they

never failed in making the most common-place event amusing.

There is another species of wit yet lower than the one I have condemned,—I mean, mimicry. It was pardonable in Matthews,—we forgive it in Yates. The former did realize, the latter, I hope, will realize, a good fortune, by assuming every character but their own. It is, however, a vulgarity not to be pardoned in one of birth and education.

To this Lady Edith certainly never descended; but that taste for exaggeration, in which her prejudices too often led her to indulge, was only a degree above it; and but for her own excellent sense, and the perpetual watching of the judicious and gentle Mrs. Halford, would have made her feared and disliked; and by none would she have been more loudly condemned than by those who were most amused with her descriptions of men and things, coloured by her own lively imagination, or distorted by her prejudice. Thus, in the instance just mentioned, she caused a highly respectable man to appear ridiculous, by her manner of relating an incident trifling in itself, though perhaps not an evidence of Lord de Lisle's penetration of character, but which some preconceived dislike of him alone induced her to regard as so heinous, or to represent as so ridiculous. By this failing, so inconsistent with her really fine character, she annoyed, to say the least of it, Lord Graham, and wounded the best feelings of an amiable girl. She was herself too good and too candid not to perceive and lament the error of which she had been guilty. The only reparation she could make Marion Gray was to devote herself to her; and the poor girl forgot

her mortification in the pleasure she felt at being noticed by Lady Edith Clavering; who was so fascinating and so amusing, and who could not be (as Marion told Janet) "so very, very wise and clever after all."

The beautiful Marion, thus under the patronage of Lady Edith Clavering, became an object of attention to the gentlemen; and so pleasant was Deerhurst becoming, that she regretted the receipt of a letter from her brother, dated Brighton, requesting her not to wait for his return to Arlingford House, where he should not be for some time, but to repair to her mother the Dowager Lady Gray, who had just taken up her residence in Seymour-street. She accordingly left Deerhurst Castle; and when next Lady Edith beheld the lovely Marion Gray, it was to regret more than ever her conduct in the relation of the affair of the bracelet and Lord de Lisle.

It had been decided that Mrs. Halford and Lady Edith should leave Deerhurst for Elphinstone the first week in March, and after remaining there two days, that they should set forth on their journey to Tryst Hurst, the seat of Lady Mary Poyntz. The departure of Marion Gray called forth numerous remarks from those loungers (and there were some of that class to be found occasionally at Deerhurst), who saw her drive from the door. All were agreed as to her extraordinary beauty, but rare as it was, it left not the slightest impression on the beholder, so soon as it was lost to the sight: although sometimes animated with great good humour, the soul of beauty, intellect, was not there. Lady Edith regretted her departure; she was anxious to have known more of

her, and to have still farther repaired her previous neglect of her. The fifteenth arrived, but up to the hour of dinner on that day, the Marquis of Ellesmere had not returned. No anxiety, however, was felt by the happy daughter of the Duke of Belmont as to the event, except inasmuch as it related to her daily rides, which had certainly been less pleasant taken under the guidance of Lord James Sedley, Mr. Spencer, or some equally careless equestrian. Her ladyship was not a bold rider, and she felt considerably more at ease with the marquis by her side, attending solely to her, than she had done since his departure; but she would have been equally as well satisfied with the duke, her father, or Lord Graham, as her escort. Soon after dinner had commenced, on the evening of the fifteenth, the sound of carriage-wheels was heard, and presently a servant delivered a few words to Lady Lucy. They informed her of the return of her brother, and a request that he might be admitted in his travelling dress; a ready assent was given, and the marquis took his place at the dinner table. All conversation, of course, turned on the journey from town just performed by the traveller,—when did he leave town?—how did he find the roads?—and what was the latest intelligence from the fashionable world? were questions rapidly put, and answered in the intervals of eating and drinking,—those amusements so necessary alike to the great and the little;—“and from the political world?” asked Lady Edith, now, for the first time, addressing the marquis.

“A letter, I have the honour of bringing from the Duke of Belmont to your ladyship, will give you

more correct information, than even I, so lately at the scene of action, can impart. I met Mr. Elphinstone in town, wishing himself, I suspect, any where else: the grand debate, for which he is there, only came on last night." News of the world of fashion followed: the court had removed from Brighton unusually early, and London was beginning to fill: the opera, too, had opened with some eclat. These and similar interesting details, retarded the withdrawal of the ladies to the saloon. On the morrow, Lady Edith renewed her rides with the marquis; who, for the succeeding fortnight, drank deeply of the cup of love, —a cup, alas! containing poison but too sure, too fatal to him!

CHAPTER XXIV.

"MAY I beg the honour of a few minutes conversation with your ladyship in the library this morning, if you are not particularly engaged?" asked the Marquis of Ellesmere of Lady Edith Clavering, on the day previous to her quitting Deerhurst.

"Certainly," was the reply, and Lady Edith passed from the conservatory, in which she had been looking at some rare exotics, into the library.

"But tell me," she said, on entering the room, "is any thing the matter? Is there intelligence

of my father, of Lady Catherine? Your lordship is unusually grave!"

"I believe," he returned, "I am 'unusually grave;' but be not alarmed, my gravity is occasioned by that which is purely selfish; my own intense anxiety on a subject which has long been near my heart, and on which your approaching departure renders it necessary I should speak;—have I your ladyship's permission?"

"Assuredly," said Lady Edith, wondering, but still impressed with the idea that some very painful intelligence was to be communicated.

The marquis, then, after a little hesitation, proceeded to lay before the astonished Lady Edith the state of his heart; to speak in earnest terms of the powerful affection he had, almost from their first introduction, felt for her, and with diffidence to presume that he might hear from her ladyship, that his love was not wholly hopeless,—not quite without return. "Tell me, Lady Edith," he said, taking her hand, which had almost unconsciously to herself been employed in playing with the seals which lay on the library table, "tell me, dare I, may I venture to hope I am not quite an object of indifference to you?"

Lady Edith's countenance was so unaffectedly distressed, that the half audible, broken words she uttered, were listened to by the lover with a painful conviction of their truth. She said, "And is it possible, my lord, we have thus fearfully, thus fatally mistaken each other?—Have the kind and friendly attentions I have received from you, been other than as a brother you would have yielded me? Has my ready accept-

ance of them been construed into more than ought to be evinced for polite and gentlemanly attention? If so, I am indeed most unhappy!"

Lady Edith's ingenuous countenance but too truly confirmed her assertion, that she was most unhappy; and the marquis, in a tone of despondency, said, "Then my first fears are confirmed, and you do not love me,—tell me at once, is there, indeed, no hope?"

"Oh! none, that I can ever love you as you would be loved, and I will not insult you by an offer of my friendship," replied the poor girl, covering her eyes with one hand:—the other was still in the possession of the marquis.

"It is then needless, useless, for me to say more now; but I believe, I trust, dear Lady Edith, the time will come when I shall joyfully accept what now appears so cold,—your friendship. I will not distress you further," and respectfully pressing the fair hand he held to his lips, he rose to leave the library.

"Stay, stay!" exclaimed Lady Edith, "in pity do not go until you have assured me I am blameless in your eyes,—that you believe me alike free from coquetry, and from that heartless vanity which could have led me to encourage your affection only thus cruelly to blight it." In saying this, Lady Edith laid her hand on that of the marquis, which rested on the arm of the fauteuil, on which she was sitting, and looking earnestly in his face, she added, "Tell me,—only tell me,—you shall not despise me."

"From my soul," replied the marquis, gazing at the lovely woman who thus appealed to him, "from my soul I acquit you of every thing not pure, candid, honourable,—nothing that is not noble can dwell in

such a form ; it is I who have been to blame. The attention, the devotion, I have evinced, are only what your birth, your beauty, and your virtue, entitle you to from every one who knows you ; but you are distressed, my sweet friend : I will leave you, and accept the assurance I now make you, that the subject never shall be renewed between us."

Lady Edith remained some minutes, after the departure of the marquis, in the library, and endeavoured to collect her scattered senses sufficiently to enable her to take a review of her conduct during her residence at Deerhurst, as far as it related to her intimacy with the Marquis of Ellesmere. She found it, however, impossible, and sought her long-tried friend, Mrs. Halford, in whom she was sure to find the most faithful chronicle of the past,—the surest, safest directress of the future. Mrs. Halford had seen the marquis follow her pupil to the conservatory, and little doubt remained on her mind that he was about to make a declaration of those feelings which had now become tolerably evident to every one but the party most concerned and interested in them. The first glance at Lady Edith's ingenuous countenance, told plainly how the short time passed in the library had been spent. She threw herself on the sofa beside Mrs. Halford, and related to her the conversation I have just detailed. When she had ended her narration, she said, "*He* generously acquits me of wrong ; but tell me, dear, dear madam, do *you* acquit me, or is that amiable man really the victim of my egregious vanity, which has led me to believe his marked devotion as only my right ? Answer me candidly, honestly, do not fear to wound me."

"The earnestness, my dear child, with which you ask my opinion, convinces me your own heart condemns you, perhaps even more than I do, or than you really deserve. Tell me, what does it say?" continued the admirable woman, drawing closer to her young friend, and taking both her hands, which she affectionately placed between hers.

"It says," replied Lady Edith, "that I have severely hurt the best feelings of a good man; but it tells me, at the same time, my error has been unintentional, and that I bitterly, deeply regret it.—I can do no more," she said, raising her beautiful face to Mrs. Halford.

"Pardon me, my child;" said that rigidly good and virtuous woman; "you may do much more.—You admit you have been in error; let us trace that error to its source,—which I will begin, by asking you how it was, that, whilst all around saw what would be the result of Lord Ellesmere's attention to you, you alone have been blind?"

"And is it really possible," said Lady Edith, "that every one,—that any one has perceived it?—Did *you* see it, and not tell me of it; not warn me of the consequence of allowing attentions I could never return, but as a friend, a sister?—Was this kind of you?"

"Edith, my child," said Mrs. Halford, gently, "had the marquis distinguished any other lady as he has distinguished you,—had he devoted himself for more than two months to Miss Gray, or Ellen St. Leger, or to Lady Anne Clifford, would you not have perceived it, and foretold the result?"

"I should, I should;" said the ingenuous girl.

"It was my overweening pride and vanity which led me to receive such devotion (as I now feel it to have been) as my right,—my due; but still you might, surely, have hinted your opinion that I was blinded."

"No, Lady Edith; I have made it a rule, from which I shall never deviate, to leave affairs of this nature wholly to your own sense and discretion; and pardon me, if I add, that I do expect to find both sufficient of themselves in a young woman of three-and-twenty. It was agreed, moreover, between the Duke of Belmont and myself, that the affair should be left entirely to yourself. I am convinced that, had you been told, on coming here, that an union between the Marquis and yourself had been long desired by the families on both sides, it would not have changed the result;—you would still have believed you were only the object of proper attention, and the knowledge of the Duke's wishes would certainly (to say the least of it) not have furthered their completion."

"And is it a marriage, then, my father has so earnestly desired;—a marriage with a man of whom he personally knew nothing, until he met him here three weeks since;—*un mariage de convenance*—a political marriage,—one which would have helped to confirm the political creed of the Marquis?"

"The politics of the Marquis were, I dare say, not forgotten, in the enumeration of the advantages to be derived from such a connection; but the Duke of Belmont had received ample and satisfactory intelligence of his talents and his accomplishments. You yourself must, I think, allow him to be a most agreeable, a most amiable man, and, it appears to me,

every way unexceptionable; although I can readily believe (indeed, I have never thought otherwise) he is not the person to win the heart of Lady Edith Clavering."

"Am I, then, so very difficult to please,—so very fastidious?" said Lady Edith, in a tone of some displeasure:

"That remains to be proved," said Mrs. Halford. "You have rejected a most excellent man;—one, methinks, whom the most fastidious might approve; but we know not yet who may succeed: some one, perhaps, who pleases you more easily, but who may, nevertheless, be very inferior to the Marquis of Ellesmere."

"I think," said her ladyship, "it is very likely no one will ever succeed in pleasing me; certainly no inferior person."

"No; but a very delightful person may still be inferior to him of whom we are speaking in those essentials I consider of so much importance: he may be very talented, yet not half so sensible,—very agreeable, yet not half so amiable, as the Marquis,—exclusively devoted to you, but with less of real attachment. At present, however, my dear Lady Edith, we will not talk more: you are vexed and dissatisfied with yourself, and, consequently, with those around you. Retire to your own room,—commune with your ingenuous heart, and we shall meet in better spirits before we descend to dinner."

"I am, indeed, angry with myself," said Lady Edith; "and very, very sorry, that I have inadvertently given pain to the Marquis:—with my father's disappointment, I confess I have no sympathy."

"In a short time, my love," said Mrs. Halford, rising from her seat as she spoke, "you will have sympathy, and, more than that, painful regret for your good and noble-minded father: now let us separate; I have all our preparations for to-morrow to expedite." Mrs. Halford kissed her unhappy pupil affectionately, and both left the room together.

Lady Edith did commune with her own heart, long and impartially; but the result was not favourable to her self-love. She felt that her high opinion of herself had been the cause of her present dilemma: that same high opinion had induced her to receive readily, for many weeks, the attention, the undivided attention of an excellent man, whose devotion she found it quite impossible to return,—and this before a large party, who had not only been themselves perfectly aware of what was passing, but who would most likely hesitate to believe in her blindness, were it even mentioned in extenuation of her fault. She should thus acquire the odious reputation of coquetry; and what would Lord and Lady Lucy Graham, and the much-esteemed Lady Emily Maitland, think of her,—those friends, whose good opinion she so greatly valued?

Whatever of regret she might eventually feel for the disappointment of the Duke, her father, she certainly was not disposed to feel any now: she had an indistinct idea that there had been some contrivance in the business,—that she was not in possession of all the facts, relating to her meeting the Marquis of Ellesmere, at Deerhurst. In the present unhealthy state of her mind, every body was suspected of having, at least, watched her movements;

and her father and Mrs. Halford were, in some way, (she could hardly to herself tell how,) implicated together, as having deceived her. These and similar reflections occupied her until her maid entered, to remind her that the first bell had sounded. Her immediate impulse was to declare her intention of not going down stairs at all; but the thought of a moment convinced her of the folly and impropriety of such a proceeding:—she, therefore, suffered herself to be dressed, and, on the last summons to dinner, descended to the saloon. To those two individuals so deeply interested in her, the traces of recent tears were visible; to all she looked pale, and very unlike the Lady Edith of the preceding days and weeks.

The Marquis evinced no symptom of what had passed;—he was, as ever, cheerful and courteous, and generally attentive. With excellent taste he suffered not the events of the morning, in the slightest degree, to influence his conduct towards the participator of those events; but led her, as usual, to the dining-table, and, as usual, placed himself beside her.

The dinner passed off dull and heavily. Lady Edith, on other days so gay and so talented, on this occasion spoke not, except in answer to the remarks of her companions on either side. All present observed her altered manner and appearance, and all naturally attributed it to her approaching departure:—even the lively Lady Emily was comparatively quiet; and Lady Lucy, hoping to restore something like animation, proposed a very early adjournment to the saloon.—Here she seated herself by Lady Edith, and, after expressing her regret at the termination of her visit, she spoke with much

pleasure of the prospect of hearing of her frequently, from Lady Emily, who was to establish herself, in due season, in Grosvenor-square; where, too, said her ladyship, in a lower tone, "I trust we shall often hear of Alfred. Will you admit him there, my love?" she asked.

"Yes, certainly;" said Edith, stammering, and blushing painfully;—"any friend of yours, dear Lady Lucy,—of my father's, will be a welcome guest to me."

Lady Lucy said no more. She saw at once something was wrong,—or, as she afterwards said, "that all was right;" and, quitting the seat she had taken by Lady Edith, she drew her children towards her, and questioned them as to their avocations and amusements during the day, and then poor Edith withdrew to her own room. Lady Lucy's manner, on the mention of her brother, convinced her, too, what was the result of her observation,—and what were her wishes, on the subject. She could only more and more condemn herself, and more admire the open and unconstrained manners of her rejected lover, during the two hours she had passed in his society. She sat long by her fire, listlessly watching the packing and preparations for the next day's journey; and, whilst she remembered the pleasure with which she had anticipated a return to her friend Miss Walcot, and to the sober pleasures of Elphinstone, she felt she was quitting Deerhurst degraded, at least in her own opinion, and on the point of giving much pain to her good and generous father, and to the dear Grahams. But she had already done more than this:—she had destroyed, for some time, the peace of an amiable man,—and one whom she now began

to wonder she could not love. Her waiting-woman had left the room, and she was still pursuing these mournful reflections, and mentally heaping reproaches on herself, when a tap at the door announced a visitor, and Lady Emily Maitland entered.

"Why, my own sweet Edith!" she said, seating herself on a little stool at her feet, "what is the matter? and what is there in this castle so fascinating, that all who leave its enchanted walls carry only sorrowful looks away with them? Do you remember Alfred's dismal face the day the duke your father carried him off? Any analogy between the cases?—any sympathy? Now do tell me, dearest! Has that little heart, at last, surrendered at discretion?"

The liveliness of Lady Emily was checked in a moment on observing the evident distress of her friend.

Lady Edith buried her face in her neck, and wept aloud. "Oh! do not," she said, again touch on the subject of my unhappiness. But, when I am gone, ask your brother why I am thus distressed,—thus wretched; and do not hate me, dear Lady Emily, when you hear how little worthy I am of your affection."

Lady Emily saw plainly it was in vain to press her further on the subject; and, ringing for her maid, desired that coffee might be served in Lady Edith's dressing-room; and, advising her soon to retire to bed, she affectionately embraced her, and left her to seek the rest of which she visibly stood so much in need.

On the following morning, Lady Edith appeared at breakfast, and so far exerted herself as to lead com-

mon observers to believe her in her usual spirits. Her travelling carriage was ordered round at twelve o'clock. She took an affectionate leave of her kind host and hostess, and Lady Emily ; exchanged adieus with the various guests still remaining ; and giving her hand to the Marquis of Ellesmere, she followed Lord Graham and Mrs. Halford to the carriage ; and with a heavy heart bade a long farewell to Deerpark Castle.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE travellers performed their journey nearly in silence. Mrs. Halford suggested to her companion the necessity of at least assuming cheerfulness, unless she wished to excite surmises, and questions it might be difficult to satisfy, amongst the kind friends to whom she was speeding.

The sun was just setting, and gilded with his last rays the still leafless trees of Elphinstone, as the carriage drove up the avenue to the house. Lady Edith raised her eyes to the windows of the rooms she knew were occupied by her friend Gertrude Walcot. She perceived her at one of them, surrounded by a little group, who were watching with all the longing of childhood, for an arrival of no particular interest to them,—it brought not papa nor more new cousins ;

but still it was an arrival ; and Lady Edith's approach had been for some time watched for.

Gertrude threw open the window at which she was standing, and, kissing her hand to the fair face which was raised in quest of her, disappeared ; and, before Mrs. Halford and Lady Edith had ascended the steps, she stood in the entrance-hall ; and, without waiting to utter the welcome which rose to her tongue, but which a sharp easterly wind would have rendered somewhat out of place in the spot on which the friends met, she conducted the travellers to a room in which they found the sweet mistress of the mansion ready to give them, what, in every sense of the words, might be termed a warm welcome. The day, though bright and clear, had been extremely cold ; and the party drew round the blazing fire of Mrs. Elphinstone's room.

Numerous inquiries were made and answered on both sides, before either had an opportunity of observing the other. Fanny and Mrs. Halford preserved, the one her placid and sensible expression of countenance,—the other, all her loveliness. But if the delicate appearance of the “governess” called forth remark, the altered manner of Lady Edith had not failed to strike and perplex those who now beheld her, and who had pictured her to themselves as she had been only a few weeks before,—all gaiety and beauty.

“Lady Edith,” said Mrs. Elphinstone, “you are overcome with your journey,—with the cold.”

“Yes, I am cold and tired,” answered Edith ; “but this delightful fire and the sweet quiet of Elphinstone, will soon revive me. But where,” she said, with more of animation than she had yet betrayed—“where

is *il buon marito*? Is he in his customary suit of scarlet?"

"Oh, no!" said the wife; "would he were even in the red coat, which I am not quite reconciled to yet, so that I were sure to see him at last! I regret to say he is still in London, detained by the events in the political world now pressing on us so thickly. His return will now, I fear, be delayed till Easter. We are literally alone,—not a gentleman, or guest of any kind, to break in on our stillness. This has induced me to desire that our dinner may be served at six; it is perhaps time we retired to dress. By-and-bye you shall see my six pretty children."

The ladies left the room for their own apartments. The dinner passed over; and Lady Edith forgot her recent mortification in the delight of finding herself once more with her friends, and in the society of those who, for the present at least, were in ignorance of the late event at Deerhurst.

After dinner, the beautiful children of Fanny, and the sweet forsaken little girls of the unhappy Howards, made their appearance. Even a mother's justifiable vanity admitted the superior beauty of the cousins. Nothing could be so sweet or fairy-like as they were; and in love to their charming aunt, they were certainly not surpassed by her own children. For Miss Walcot, too, they manifested the same fondness and respect as that which had long been felt for her by their cousins. That amiable friend was evidently out of health; and much as all parties wished to linger amid the social pleasures of Elphinstone, it was decided, that in consequence of Miss Walcot's indis-

position, the party should leave —shire on the day after the next.

Fanny no longer dreaded an arrangement which would leave her, as she formerly termed it, "alone." She now felt she had her blooming family around her, a respectable and attached tenantry near, and a multitude of poor pensioners in her immediate vicinity. With all the duties entailed on her by these several ties, she had now learnt to believe there was no being alone: in the performance of these duties, she knew that no day could be too long. To what, to whom, did she owe all this blessed knowledge? To whom did she owe it, that she was no longer a complaining wife?—that she had learnt to believe all her husband did was right?—to approve even hunting, and protracted dinners? To one of the despised race,—to her governess! to that amiable and judicious female who, in twelve little months, had wrought that change on her ductile nature, which made *her* happy, and all around her blessed. How had this been accomplished? by what magic had Miss Walcot transformed the indolent, the luxurious, and half-spoiled Mrs. Elphinstone, into the reflecting, rational, and excellent wife and mother?—By the simple magic of her own bright example, which led her to think and reason: by that unseen but certain influence which a superior mind never fails to obtain over a weak one; and by inducing her to study in that Sacred Volume those truths, those duties, without a knowledge of which, all that the wisest have taught is vain and useless.

Fanny had ever been a virtuous wife, and though not

a judicious, at least a fond mother. From Miss Walcot she had learned that, to be a good wife, it was not sufficient to be a virtuous one only : that it is in the little every-day occurrences of life that *conduct* is necessary, and that forbearance, without which, married-life must be, of all states, the most unhappy. She had learned now to admire and appreciate her husband's solid virtues, to accommodate herself to those trifling peculiarities which had formerly annoyed her, and to believe him nearly faultless, or at least to think that where dissimilarity of taste did exist, the fault was hers rather than Mr. Elphinstone's. She had always been aware of, and regretted, the errors of her miserable education. But having had no judicious hand to guide or direct her, and having too little energy of character to seek herself a remedy, for what she internally felt to be wrong, she had gone on, and would have gone on, in most of the prejudices in which she had been brought up. But such was not to be the case: a blessed fortune threw Miss Walcot in her way. And at the time of which I now write, Mrs. Elphinstone, without being a clever woman, was every thing beside which is most delightful in her sex. Miss Walcot still retained the situation of governess at Elphinstone, although, for some time past, she had been assisted in her duties by a young lady, whose amiable character fitted her to be the coadjutrix of the admirable Gertrude.

Before the ladies quitted the breakfast-table on the morning after the arrival of Mrs. Halford and Lady Edith, Mrs. Elphinstone asked what had been the employments and amusements at Deerpark ?

"What," she inquired, "was the order of the day ?

were you intellectual or political? or in what consisted the great charms of the castle?"

"Chiefly, I think," said Mrs. Halford, perceiving Lady Edith silent to Mrs. Elphinstone's inquiry,—“in the extreme politeness and attention of Lord and Lady Lucy Graham, and in the singularly happy manner in which they had assorted their guests,—all was so very unlike what one usually finds at great country-houses."

"No quarrelling and no love-making?" asked Fanny, again addressing herself to Lady Edith.

"None, that I am aware of," said Edith, rising hastily from her chair, and escaping by a French window into the garden, under pretence of joining the children, who had just appeared in sight, and regardless of a sharp wind on a cold March morning, for which her delicate white dress particularly unfitted her.

Gertrude looked after her with some surprise; and Mrs. Elphinstone turning to Mrs. Halford, asked, "Is not Lady Edith out of health? or is it that her spirits are less equable than formerly? She denies all love-making at Deerhurst; but I shall begin to suspect her hard little heart has really been touched at last. What became of the Marquis of Ellesmere?—he was the chevalier 'par excellence,' when we left the castle."

"He is still there," replied Mrs. Halford, evading the first part of Mrs. Elphinstone's speech.

"That would be a connection, I imagine," continued Fanny, "highly agreeable to the duke, who, with all his love of liberty and the people, had rather his fair daughter married a marquis than a com-

moner. What sort of a place is Tryst Hurst?—who lives there besides Lady Mary Poyntz? Her son, I imagine, is wedded to London and St. Stephen's Chapel."

"No," replied Gertrude: "as a man of importance in the world of politics, he is, of necessity, much there; but, as an author, I believe he is very glad to find himself sometimes in the quiet shades of Tryst Hurst. Do you know Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz?" asked Gertrude of Mrs. Halford.

"I have never seen him," she replied; "he was abroad when Lady Mary Poyntz visited Belmont.—Is he as clever as he is represented to be?"

"I hardly know how to reply to that question," returned Gertrude, "there are so many kinds of cleverness: he is a splendid scholar, a deep politician. I shall leave you to judge for yourself, my dear madam, which you will, ere long, have ample opportunity of doing. The prorogation of parliament, now daily expected, will bring him speedily to Tryst Hurst."

"And my husband to me, I hope," said Fanny, laughing. "Now, let us seek Lady Edith."

She opened the window as she spoke, and saw her children; from them she learnt that Lady Edith had only remained with them a very short time, and entered the house directly on quitting them;—she was discovered in the library deeply immersed in politics. The papers were regularly forwarded to her, by order of the duke, and, on looking down the columns of the Morning Chronicle to-day, she found politics must have given way strangely to the many pleasures of Deerhurst, for she was at a loss to comprehend much

she saw, particularly the passages marked for her especial attention by the duke, her noble parent. Lady Edith, for some weeks past, had owned unwillingly to herself, that it was a relief not to be constantly hearing political affairs discussed ; and there were even times when she regretted she had ever been brought up to think and talk of them. With her peculiarly strong tendency to maintain her own opinion, studies and conversations of a political nature were, indeed, the very worst she could have been engaged in ; for I always remark it is a subject on which even men are invariably conceited and obstinate, and that he who will most readily yield an opinion on any other topic, pertinaciously adheres to those he may have formed or imbibed on politics. So it must be with women, who are brought up to think of them as of major importance : on every subject beside, I would have a woman decide for herself,—on the subject of politics, I would have her always adopt those of her father, or of her husband. I am persuaded, she can, of herself, know nothing of the matter ; perhaps Lady Edith may one day think so too, and adopt my advice,—*nous verrons*.

In detailing the manner in which the unexpected proposals of the marquis affected Lady Edith, I have said very little of his conduct subsequently to her rejection of those proposals, and nothing of his state of feelings. He continued quietly polite to all around him ; his manners were usually reserved, and therefore less liable to observation on any change than those of a more lively person ; his fond sister, Lady Emily, alone perceived that something was wrong, and from the few words uttered by

Lady Edith in her dressing-room, she was convinced that young lady was in some way connected with a depression of spirit, which certainly did evince itself, during their *tête-à-tête* rides and walks; and a few days after the departure of the travellers for Elphinstone, she ventured one evening, on finding herself alone with him, to inquire if he had been struck with Lady Edith's altered manner, and whether he could at all account for it. The marquis looked earnestly at his sister, and said, "Did Lady Edith tell you to ask me this?"

"Lady Emily confessed that she had, and then repeated the conversation or rather the few incoherent expressions which fell from Lady Edith on the night previous to her quitting Deerhurst. "And now," she said, "my dear Alfred, what was the meaning of those words?—what has she done?—why does she fear I may hate her? and how is it you are in possession of the solution to all this mystery?"

The marquis then related the short but decisive scene which transpired in the library; but, whilst he candidly acknowledged his deep enduring love for this beautiful and talented woman, he exculpated her in the strongest manner, from the charge to which he saw she was liable, of having encouraged his attention and devotion only to disappoint them. "I believe her," he added, "to be the very soul of honour and propriety; her deep distress clearly proves the delicacy and purity of her feelings."

"I admit," replied the sister, gravely, "she is all you represent her; but as she is also extremely clever, and singularly quick-sighted on most occasions, to what are we to attribute her blindness in an instance

in which we are all of us apt to see with peculiar clearness?"

"I know not,—I cannot tell," said the marquis; "the fault was probably mine; I deceived myself in supposing she approved my attention, which, after all, was not more than she is entitled to, from every one who beholds her."

"You speak like a lover, Alfred, and are yourself blind; your attentions to Lady Edith Claverling were obvious to all. No one did, or could doubt, whither they tended, and they were such as no young woman ought to have received, unless they were of more than common interest to her. Does Lord Graham know what has transpired?"

"He does not, nor do I for the present wish he should; or, indeed, that he ever should. I would not, for worlds, lessen his high opinion of Lady Edith."

"Then it is you, who must submit to the charge so particularly applicable to Lady Edith Claverling; you must submit to be thought capricious, and to have encouraged hopes you never meant to fulfil."

"Be it so; only rescue her fair name from an imputation I am convinced it merits not. Let her retain the friendship of Lord Graham and Lucy, and, as you love me, Emily," he said, taking both her hands in his, "continue to her the attachment you have mutually felt. Let no word or look evince to her, when you meet in London, that suspicion of her conduct has ever lurked for one moment in your bosom. You must," continued the honourable-minded man, "take a lesson from me. I shall see her, and hear

her, and love her as man scarcely ever did love; but no one will suspect the depth of that love—the extent of that misery, which will dwell together in my ‘heart of hearts.’”

The voice of the lover faltered, and his sister, looking at him fondly, exclaimed,

“Ah, Alfred! Lady Edith cannot long be insensible to such worth; she must, she will return your affection.”

“For her sake, I hope not. I have sought her love, and it has been refused me; no earthly consideration would induce me ever more to seek it, or, indeed, to accept it, were it offered me.”

Lady Emily, warm-hearted and impetuous, felt commiseration too deeply for her brother, to evince, at the present moment, any compassion towards her offending friend. She could not trace her conduct to the right source, and naturally enough believed she had, in some degree, acted dishonourably towards this beloved brother. She promised obedience to his wishes, however, and that what had passed should not in any way influence her conduct, or affect her proposed visit to Grosvenor Square.

The worst result of this affair, setting aside the disappointed hopes of the marquis, remained to Mrs. Halford, in her task of writing to the duke of Belmont, which it was arranged, when they met at Deerhurst, should be the case, whenever the very obvious attentions of the marquis should terminate, as the duke felt convinced they would, in proposals to the Lady Edith. Nothing, however, was left to Mrs. Halford, but to perform her promise, and she therefore proceeded to inform the duke that the antici-

pated proposal had taken place, and had, as she foretold, been declined. She attempted not to soften the matter to the duke,—she told him the affair precisely as it stood, offering no opinion,—holding out no hope that his wishes might yet be realized, and respectfully urging the duke to take no notice of what had transpired. She concluded her short letter, by stating, that Lady Edith was well; and that the day following was fixed for their journey as far as Worcester, where they purposed sleeping, and arriving at an early hour of the following day at Tryst Hurst.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LADY Mary Poyntz was the widow of Colonel Poyntz, a man who distinguished himself, during his military career, for courage and conduct of the most honourable nature: he fought and fell at the battle of Waterloo, leaving a widow (many years younger than himself) and one son, slenderly provided for. Lady Mary, descended from a long line of noble ancestors, inherited from them little more than beauty and virtue. The death of an uncle, however, which soon followed that of her husband, placed her in affluence and comfort: the lovely estate of Tryst Hurst, in the county of Gloucester, became

hers; and at her death was to descend, without reservation, to her son. At the period at which I write, Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz was in his twenty-eighth year, and had recently been re-elected member for the southern division of the county of ——. On the passing of the Reform Bill he lost his seat, and regained it during the temporary re-action of 1834. He was a brilliant orator, and a sound reasoner, and his speeches in the house were listened to with attention from his own party, and with patience from the adverse one. He was a decided, but not a violent Tory; indeed, violence formed no part of his character. He was singularly quiet in his manners, and amiable in disposition. He was generally pronounced very unlike other people;—every hour not devoted to politics was employed in literary pursuits. He never mixed in society except in his mother's house, where he performed the part of host with urbanity and elegance.

Lady Mary Poyntz, now in her forty-ninth year, was an admirable specimen of what is usually designated the old school. She yet retained striking remains of beauty; was somewhat precise in her dress and manner;—so attached to her religion, as to be rigid in her observance of all its rites, and to show forth in her own example, that it was not in its rites only she was a Christian,—she was one in spirit and in truth;—meek, charitable, and full of forbearance. She was admired by her neighbours, loved by her faithful, long-tried servants, and adored by her son, in whom love for this sweet mother seemed to be the part of his character best understood and appreciated; for even those who pronounced him very singular,

declared, at the same time, it was delightful to see Fitzroy Poyntz with his mother.

Mrs. Halford, with her two companions, proceeded on her journey for some time in silence. Lady Edith recurred to the past, and the "Governess" dwelt with intense fondness on the beloved beings she had left. Fanny's warm and tearful farewell was still felt; her whispers of gratitude and affection, with the louder, but not less sincere regrets and adieux of her pupils, still sounded in her ears. She leaned back in a corner of the carriage, and took a mental review of the past year,—of that year in which she had entered on duties so new to her,—on a world in which she had been so tenderly treated. The retrospect was one of unmixed satisfaction. She thought on Mrs. Elphinstone, as she first beheld her,—lovely, but indolent, idle, and haughty: again she saw her pupils noisy, untaught, and fearfully proud;—now she could behold in their sweet mother only what was excellent in woman,—in themselves only what was charming and most promising in children: then she thought of poor Catherine, and Herbert Lyster; she had witnessed her death-bed of hope and peace; she had seen him rise from the side of that bed of death a wiser and a better man.

Gertrude felt that it was she who, in her despised character of a governess, had been chosen as the humble instrument of so much good:—tears of pious gratitude fell from her eyes, and she silently prayed for strength to continue her exertions in the sphere which had been selected for her. She was grateful, also, most grateful, for her own share of good,—for the affectionate respect with which she had, with very

trifling exceptions, been treated; and no ambitious views or wishes for herself mixed themselves with her aspirations:—she remembered, without regret, the sacrifice of inclination she had made in her rejection of Lord de Lisle, upon what she believed to be principle; and she wished now only for health sufficient to enable her to discharge, for years to come, duties which had now become real pleasures to her.

Far different were the reflections of the high-born, beautiful, titled possessor of two hundred thousand pounds. What, it may be asked, could be wanted, in addition to such extraordinary gifts of fortune?—what more could Edith Clavering desire?—what could embitter her reflections? Edith Clavering wanted self-esteem; she wanted humility to enable her to bear its loss, and to regain it. Not only in the affair of the Marquis, but in many others, she felt she had been much to blame, but was more distressed at the degradation of having committed a fault, than at the fault itself: she, too, shed tears; but they were not tears of humility,—they were more nearly akin to pride. The anticipation of the Duke's vexation, also, was another source of annoyance to her, and she looked forward to her visit to Tryst Hurst,—to her subsequent removal to London, and all its pleasures, with a sickly feeling of wearisomeness and dislike.

Mrs. Halford saw what was passing in the mind of her pupil, and she augured future good, from the deep and somewhat overcharged impression the events of the past winter had made on her. Lady Edith lacked but one virtue to have made her perfect; that one virtue would have corrected all her failings:—her

mind, however, was fully prepared for its reception; and it might be fairly inferred, the time would arrive when, to the warmth and zeal of the Christian, Edith Clavering would possess the humility of one.

The travellers slept the first night at Worcester, and on the following day pursued their journey along the lovely banks of the Severn. At the end of two stages, they found themselves entering the enchanting grounds of Tryst Hurst: the house was a large gothic building, presenting an appearance of extreme neatness and comfort; the park, though not large, was beautifully wooded, and every now and then a view of the noble rapid Severn, was distinguishable through the fine trees. Lady Edith's *avant-courier* had preceded her a short time, and as soon as the well-appointed travelling-carriage appeared in sight, Lady Mary Poyntz, attended by her principal servants, presented herself at the top of the long flight of steps which led to the entrance hall, and, with old-fashioned politeness and hospitality, received her noble guest, the daughter of her most respected friend the Duke of Belmont. She, herself, conducted her to the saloon, and, after affectionately welcoming her, turned to Mrs. Halford, and expressed the pleasure she felt at seeing her an inmate of Tryst Hurst. Her reception of Gertrude was the very extreme of tenderness. The "governess" she had known from her earliest childhood; she was her model of female virtue and propriety. Her father, Colonel Walcot, had been the guardian and intimate acquaintance of Lady Mary Fitzroy;—had himself conferred her fair hand on his valued friend, Colonel Poyntz, and on his death-bed had recommended his daughter to her

friendship. It was for some time her wish that her son should view Gertrude with the same partial eyes with which she herself regarded her; but, after looking at her with almost rude earnestness for a very long time, and remarking she was strikingly like a cameo (reckoned the finest in the world) which he saw at Palermo, he appeared never after to notice her, or to think about her, and Lady Mary had long abandoned this once favourite project. She informed her visitors that she was in daily expectation of her son's return into Gloucestershire, when the number of their guests would be increased: at present, with the exception of the young Duchess of Belton, her niece, and the right honourable daughters of Lady Carhampton, they were the only visitors at Tryst Hurst. In this enumeration her ladyship omitted to mention Lord James Fitzroy, her brother, an antiquated, but very polished beau of fifty.

Gertrude Walcot, never singular, entered the saloon before dinner, in time to witness the *entrée* of the other visitors. She was soon joined by the aforementioned brother of her hostess, to whom she had been slightly known some years before:—he greeted her, as a highly-esteemed friend of his sister, kindly and respectfully; and expressed the anxiety he felt to see her travelling companion, the Lady Edith Clavering.

"Report," he said, "speaks loudly of her beauty and talent. Does it, as is generally the case, exaggerate on the subject of the Lady Edith? Perhaps, (though it may hardly be fair to ask such a question of one lady relative to another) you, however," he continued, bowing low as he spoke,—“you, Miss

Walcot, can afford to be liberal in your critique on beauty.—I may, therefore, safely appeal to you. Is the Lady Edith so very handsome?"

"Indeed," replied Gertrude, with animation, "I think there can be no question on the subject of Lady Edith's beauty:—she is particularly lovely, and endued with considerable talent;—she is, also, very amiable."

"Something too much given to politics," returned his lordship;—is it not so?—A study not adapted to the delicate mind of a female. Are you not of that opinion, Miss Walcot?"

"Indeed I am; but, in the case of Lady Edith Clavering, it was hardly possible to avoid feeling an interest in the passing events in the political world; the Duke, her father, being, as you are aware, so enthusiastic,—so decidedly the leader of his present powerful party. For his daughter, however, I must say thus much,—that she rarely introduces or even joins in the subject."

The entrance of Lady Mary and the two Miss Digbys, daughters of Lady Carhampton, put a stop to the conversation. Gertrude was immediately presented to the young ladies; from whom, in exchange for her graceful acknowledgment of the introduction, she received a rude stare, and an inclination of the head, so insolent as to be, for a moment, felt by the governess, and observed by Lady Mary. No notice, however, was taken at the time; and attention was now directed to the entrance of Mrs. Halford and her pupil.

The latter fully justified, by her present appearance, all Lord John Fitzroy had heard of her; and,

as Gertrude looked at her, she thought she had never seen her half so lovely. Her reception from the Miss Digbys was very different to the one bestowed on her friend; it was as disgustingly obsequious to the Duke's daughter as it had been insolent to the governess. These young ladies (on their father's side well descended) found themselves at his death very poor. Doubtful of their place in society, and, oh! worse than all, unmarried, and unsought in marriage, Lady Carhampton had brought them to Cheltenham as the last resource. She could no longer afford London, and was determined, before she buried them and herself in the jointure-house for ever, to give them one trial at the fashionable watering-place I have just named. Hoping that, among the second-rate gentry of that idle place, she might find some who would be dazzled with her title, and the comparative style in which she lived, and rid her of these unwished-for appendages to widowhood,—two unmarried, unpretty daughters.

Lord Carhampton had been well known to the amiable mistress of Tryst Hurst; and hearing his lady and her daughters were within a morning drive, she had written to Lady C. requesting the Miss Digbys would return with her on the following Tuesday, when she would pay her respects to Lady Carhampton. The invitation was accepted, and when the party from Elphinstone arrived, the young ladies had been some days at Tryst Hurst. Lady Mary, deeply read in female character, soon saw into that of her newly arrived guests. Miss Digby, at twenty-eight, had more sense than her sister, who, two years younger, betrayed to every one the grand point to

which all her wishes turned,—that important point was matrimony: they were neither of them handsome. Miss Digby looked as if she had been pretty once: to this distinction Rose had never had the slightest title: they were neither of them deficient in talent or accomplishment, and were inordinately proud. Their prejudice against Gertrude Walcot was extreme, and derived from that respectable source, their waiting-woman, who, having been in the capacity of sub-abigail to Lady Oakeley, during her visit at Elphinstone, had given a full description of the governess; of her beauty, of her pride, and of the very distinguished treatment she received from Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone. To mortify her was the amiable resolution of these envious girls, who had, for years past, set themselves in array against every pretty unpretending young woman that came within their reach; but, to be thrown on terms of equality with one of these “persons,” was, indeed, quite too much, and it was decided that Miss Walcot, in her capacity of governess, must be “looked into nothing.” Further than this, they dared not proceed in a house of which Lady Mary Poyntz was the mistress; but their first notice of Miss Walcot was worthy of their amiable resolution.

Dinner waited some time for the young Duchess of Belton, who at length made her appearance. She was a very little woman, without the slightest pretension to beauty, nor was she particularly talented, but she was perfectly good-natured, quiet in her manners, and neat, even to plainness, in her dress. It was some time before she evinced any great interest for the individuals about her, but when her

interest was excited, or her feelings roused, she became warm and ardent. She had seldom troubled herself so much about any body as she had done on behalf of the honourable Miss Digbys; and it was in disliking them far beyond any two people she had ever yet seen. She possessed sense enough to perceive and despise their futile attempts at grandeur, as well as their servile obsequiousness to herself; and some remarks they had made to her grace on the subject of Miss Walcot, at once determined her to patronize the "governess," and to mortify the "odious Digbys." She listened to their remarks with just that sort of *insouciance*, which leaves it doubtful whether your opinions are coincided with or not. On entering the room, she apologized in a voice of considerable sweetness, for having, as she feared, delayed dinner; accounting for it, by stating she had been distressed by intelligence from town, and obliged to reply to it.

"And now," said her grace, "having, I hope, made my peace with your ladyship, may I beg for a particular introduction to your friends from Elphinstone?—Lady Edith Clavering," she said, turning to that young lady, who had risen to meet her, "and I have sometimes met in the crowded saloons of London:—Mrs. Halford, too, I have had the pleasure of seeing. This lady, I presume," she said, advancing towards the 'governess,' "is the Miss Walcot of whom you have so often spoken, whom I have so long wished to know; and if," she added, "the truth must be told, of whom I have felt somewhat jealous,—it is such an enviable distinction to be loved and admired by Lady Mary Poyntz, that I have sometimes grudged the

large share you, Miss Walcot, possess, of her affection and admiration ;” then, hearing the announcement of dinner, she drew Gertrude’s arm within her own, and begged to be allowed, in default of a better cavalier, to conduct her to the dining-room. “ Indeed, my dear aunt,” she said, “ I shall begin to long for the prorogation of parliament, if it is to bring my cousin and some more of the honourable members of the lower house.”

“ Not forgetting those of the upper house,” said Lord John Fitzroy ;—“ we shall, I hope, see his grace of Belton at the same time.”

“ True, my dear sir, I assure you I had not overlooked that pleasing possibility ; but the truth is, that although two ladies may do very well alone, I mean without gentlemen, it becomes rather formidable, when that number is multiplied, as is the case now. You left a large party at Deerhurst, I presume, Lady Edith ;—the Marquis of Ellesmere is arrived, I understand,—is he as quiet and amiable as he was previous to his departure for the continent ? He once accompanied my brother home from Cambridge, and we were all delighted with him.”

Lady Edith made no reply to the observations on the marquis, but remarked, that Deerhurst had been very full of company, and very pleasant. Miss Digby inquired of Lady Edith, if it were true, the very extraordinary report she had heard relative to Lady Lucy Graham ?

“ Until I know the nature of that report,” answered Lady Edith, “ I cannot either confirm or contradict it ; may I ask what it is ?”

“ Why,” returned the lady, “ that the governesses

at Deerhurst Castle, are actually introduced to the guests. I conclude, however, such an account cannot be correct."

"I assure you," said Lady Edith, "your conclusion is false; amongst many charming persons, the most elegant young woman ever to be seen in the saloon at Deerhurst, is Miss Manvers, who conducts the education of Lord Graham's children."

"Is it possible?" said Miss Rose, affecting extreme astonishment; "I am sure our governess was never suffered to enter any room but those particularly appropriated to herself. Mamma never suffered the slightest intrusion from the persons who educated us."

"Your mamma was right," said the Duchess, quietly; "it requires high birth,—undisputed rank to step out of the beaten path. Lady Carhampton was very right."

This speech was so calmly, so coolly uttered, that an indifferent person would have detected nothing that did not meet the ear; but Lady Mary, who had witnessed the conduct of the Miss Digbys, on Gertrude's introduction to them, and Lady Edith, whose acute and instant comprehension of what was passing, could both have thanked the amiable little duchess for a speech more than deserved by the impertinence which called it forth.

The honourable Miss Digbys were beyond measure provoked, but they were too politic and too cowardly to retort on a duchess; they, however, indemnified themselves for this forbearance, by determining to dislike Gertrude with all their hearts. In two days after this conversation, the news of the prorogation

of parliament arrived; and, on the evening of the third day, a travelling carriage-and-four dashed up to the door of Tryst Hurst,—a ducal coronet blazed on its shining pannels; and, in the next minute, a doting mother, and a fond, good little wife, were clasped in the arms most dear to them. The carriage contained the Duke of Belton and Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I SUSPECT," said Lady Edith, to Miss Walcot, as, arm in arm, they traversed together the gallery which led to the sleeping apartments, "that this Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz is very singular, and not a little affected. The idea of his not making his appearance this evening!—I am fully prepared to dislike him extremely."

Gertrude laughed, and accused Lady Edith of too much precipitancy in thus early condemning the unknown Mr. Poyntz to the weight of her preconceived displeasure. "Now confess; is not your vanity wounded by the fact of his waiting patiently for tomorrow's breakfast hour, before he sees with his own eyes, hears with his own ears, the Lady Edith Cla-

vering, of whom he has been told so much ? Come, confess, my sweet friend, that so it is."

"No, indeed," replied Edith, "I deny the charge altogether. I believe, in truth, my curiosity is annoyed at having to wait nearly twelve hours more before it can be gratified by the sight of the intellectual Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz ;—you did see him, did you not ?"

"Yes ; I was in Lady Mary's dressing-room when he arrived so unexpectedly. It is to me always difficult to believe that the warm affectionate son, is really the cold reserved person who presents himself to common beholders."

The ladies retired to their respective rooms ; Gertrude to think of Elphinstone and its dear inmates, and Lady Edith to wonder why Mr. Poyntz had not chosen to appear,—whether she should see him at breakfast. She went to sleep, dreaming of a pale and very interesting looking man, who must, she thought, on waking, have been Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz ; although it then seemed to her for the first time, that no one, on mentioning him, had said whether or not he was handsome : she decided this important point in her own mind, by coming to the conclusion, that as Lady Mary had been so handsome, it was most likely her son was so likewise.

I know not if it were by design or accident, that Lady Edith's simple blond cap was unusually becoming on this morning ; but certain it is she had rarely, if ever, looked prettier than on descending to the breakfast-room. It was the custom at Tryet Hurst to announce the breakfast hour, and strictly to adhere to it ;—indeed, punctuality was a virtue

greatly insisted on, in the well-regulated mansion of Lady Mary. It were, perhaps, well, for the comfort of society in general, if it were more strictly enforced and adhered to; for, in the daily, hourly intercourse of life, there is nothing can more contribute to the comfort and good order of a family, than an observance of punctuality; nothing that more completely destroys both, than an infringement of its rules. The best bred, the most truly polite man of the day, is one of our Royal Dukes; he is, also, one of the most scrupulously punctual men.

Now, punctuality was certainly not one of Lady Edith's virtues; and, on the morning of which I am now writing, it was considerably past the breakfast hour when she made her appearance. The party were all assembled,—a chair was vacant on one side of the Duke of Belton, and on this she seated herself. After she had received her chocolate from Lord John Fitzroy, and the offer of every thing on the table from the obsequious daughters of Lady Carhampton, she raised her eyes, and saw, seated by the Duchess of Belton, what she then thought one of the plainest men she had ever beheld. He was extremely pale; his large dark eyes were not either particularly bright, or very expressive; and there was an air of carelessness,—of want of attention to dress, in his appearance, that struck her forcibly. She mentally exclaimed, "This cannot be the son of the handsome, elegantly neat, Lady Mary!—and yet, who is it?"—He had not been named to her; nor did he appear once to have looked at her: he was conversing in a low tone to her Grace of Belton. The rest of the party were listening to an animated account of a

magnificent fête given at Twickenham, by the Countess of Oakeley; but Edith felt it impossible to attend to the narrator, the pleasing and animated Duke;—she felt it equally impossible to take her eyes from the singular-looking stranger. Breakfast ended, Lady Mary rose from her seat; and, speaking to the gentleman who had so puzzled the Lady Edith, she directed his attention to that young lady, who, for the first time, he appeared to see; and, in answer to Lady Mary, he said,—

“Oh, certainly, ma’am, if you wish it;” and, rising from his chair, he was conducted to the spot occupied by Lady Edith.

“It is a rule here,” said the amiable lady of the house, “never to interrupt the quiet of breakfast; for which reason, my dear Lady Edith, I have not yet introduced my son to you. Allow me, now, to have that pleasure.”

The look of surprise which passed over the expressive features of the beautiful Edith, was, probably, not observed by the mother;—by the son it certainly was not: he bowed low to the fair creature before him, but without for one moment raising his eyes. The introduction over, he appeared to think nothing more required of him, on the present occasion; and, turning to the Duke, he expressed a wish to know what were the arrangements for the day;—that if not yet decided on, he begged to be told if he could be of the slightest use in showing the beauties of the neighbourhood; in which case he should have much pleasure in driving the Duchess in her poney phaeton.

“Ah,” said her Grace, “I shall like, extremely, to

drive out ; but do you know, Fitzroy, we are such an old-fashioned couple, we shall prefer not being separated ; therefore we will take my poney carriage, and you can drive."

"I can drive my mother," said Fitzroy, hastily.

This arrangement, which certainly spoke more for his filial affection than for his gallantry, was not heard by the young ladies, who had all left the room, and were now strolling on the lawn, before the windows.

As the days were not yet long enough to admit of going out any distance after luncheon, it was decided that the carriages should be ordered immediately, and that the party should proceed to Cheltenham, from which place they were only distant ten miles.—The Duchess was anxious to procure some books from Williams's, and the Miss Digbys to obtain a permission (of which they were sure, but which they thought it better to doubt) to remain a few days longer at Tryst Hurst ; it was therefore decided, that Mrs. Halford, with her pupil, and the Misses Digby, should occupy Lady Mary's barouche, she herself preferring the quiet of home ; and that the little poney carriage, so peculiarly hers, should be driven by Mr. Poyntz, Miss Walcot being his companion.

It was on most occasions a matter of indifference to Lady Edith, where or with whom she rode, or drove—or how the arrangement (so difficult to form) should be made. On the present occasion, however, she wondered who had decided for her, that she was to be in the same carriage with the Miss Digbys,—and still more did she wonder how it was that Gertrude should be selected as the companion of Mr.

Poyntz,—the extraordinary-looking Mr. Poyntz—but so it was, and she had only to listen to the description of Cheltenham gaieties as detailed by her younger companions, or the minute remarks of Lord John, who rode by the carriage, on the passing scenery.—The occupants of the little poney chaise drove on for some time in silence, when Gertrude asked her companion what he thought of Lady Edith Clavering?

“Nothing; I have not seen her,” was the reply.

Gertrude laughed, and said, “Is it possible you could sit a whole hour so near so beautiful a person, and not see her?”

“Yes, very possible; for such, I assure you, is the fact. Is Lady Edith very handsome, then?” asked the ‘extraordinary’ Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz.

“The handsomest woman, I imagine, of the day,” was the reply.

“I doubt that very much,” returned the insensible; and the conversation ceased for some miles.

On arriving at Cheltenham, the High-street exhibited its usual busy scene;—it was, however, too early for the butterflies of the place to be abroad. The Duchess procured her novel—the Miss Digbys their leave of absence, and by a circuitous and pretty route, the party returned to Tryst Hurst.

After luncheon, Lady Mary conducted the ladies over her dairy, her poultry yards, and garden: all exhibited the same beautiful order and neatness as presented themselves in the interior of the mansion. The party continued their walk, until the setting sun warned them to return to the house. There were yet two hours to dinner, and Lady Edith adjourned, as

was her daily custom, to the library: there, whether at home or abroad, she was in the habit of remaining until summoned to her toilette by her waiting-woman. An Indian screen of exquisite workmanship was placed between the door and the fire; and it was not until Edith had nearly reached the large library chair on which she intended to indulge, that she perceived the room was already occupied.

Deeply absorbed in the perusal of the "Times" newspaper, from which he was evidently making notes, sat Mr. Poyntz. He must have seen her; but he continued the perusal of the leading article, until Lady Edith's sweet voice caused him to look off.

"I fear," she said, "I may disturb you,—I will infringe one of Lady Mary's rules, and carry my book away with me."

"Are you then going to be very noisy, that you fear to disturb me?" said Fitzroy:—he said this with the smile so peculiar to him,—the bland beautiful smile, which once seen, never could be forgotten; but he continued, rising as he spoke, "You shall neither infringe my mother's rules, nor leave the library,—I will go myself." So saying, he bowed to his fair companion, and left the room.

All this had passed so rapidly, that Edith remained for a minute or two in doubt whether it were true, that she had beheld and spoken to Fitzroy Poyntz, and whether the grave, plain man, she had seen at breakfast, were really the same with the elegant, almost playful person, who had just quitted the library; and above all she was inclined to doubt, whether this same grave man ever could have smiled such a smile as for a moment beamed on her. Her

studious fit was gone; for the first time in her life she had seen a man who had interested her, by his singularities, she then thought; alas! it was by that silent magic which must be felt to be understood.

Fitzroy Poyntz was the first man, who had even for a moment created an interest in the pure bosom of Edith Clavering. She had been amused by some men of talent,—she had pitied, deeply pitied the Marquis of Ellesmere; but it was the plain singular Mr. Poyntz,—the confirmed tory,—the man she had declared she never should like, who was to teach her the one sentiment she had never known,—the deep passion of love. Lady Edith had been some time in the library, when she was joined there by the governess.

“Are you so deep in study, my dear lady?” said Gertrude,—“and by the flickering light of this great fire! But I see no book in your hand, therefore, I conclude, you have been studying in the broad page of humanity.”

“Just so,” replied Edith; “and the result of my study is, that life is full of cares and troubles, and those that by inheritance do not fall to our lot, we are ever most ingenious in weaving for ourselves.”

“All very trite and very true,” replied Gertrude; “but what has given rise to this little fit of musing?—what cares and sorrows has your ladyship woven? for certain I am, you have inherited none. Has the Duke of Belmont filled you with forebodings on the coming events in the political world? or has some one in whom you had hoped better things, voted with the opposition?—do tell me,” she said, bending over her fair friend.

"Indeed, my dear Gertrude, I have nothing to tell, except that I am getting very tired of politics altogether,—I wish my good father were less earnest on the subject."

"Getting tired of politics!" said Gertrude in a tone of surprise,—“then you are changing indeed!—but here is a summons to dress;—put on some roses and smiles, and look very lovely to-night. I want Mr. Poyntz to see you to advantage; just now you look too grave and dull for Lady Edith Clavering."

"Is it, then, necessary I should laugh, to be seen by Mr. Poyntz?" said Edith, taking the arm of Gertrude, and proceeding to her own room. In her way thither she tapped at the door of Mrs. Halford's dressing room, and almost envied the look of placid content which was depicted on the sweet face of her friend. She was already dressed, and was reading; she, however, acceded to Edith's request, that she would take her book into her room, and sit with her whilst the necessary duty of the toilette was going on.

The presence of the waiting maids would of course have prevented more than conversation on general topics, even had Lady Edith wished to converse more confidentially with her friend; but such was not the case, and for the first time in her life, she would have been puzzled, had she found herself quite alone with her. Just as they were on the point of going down stairs, a message was brought to Mrs. Halford, from Lady Mary, requesting to see her for five minutes; she accordingly left the dressing room, in compliance with her ladyship's wishes, and Lady Edith sought the apartment of Miss Walcot, hoping to find (as was the case) that she had not yet de-

scended to the saloon. Lady Edith had taken Gertrude's advice; she was all smiles and roses, and looked as lively as her friend could desire. Her dress was always studiously elegant, but she appeared to-day to be unusually well-dressed, and Gertrude felt persuaded, that Fitzroy Poyntz, however much he had failed to observe her at breakfast, must, at any rate, see and admire her now. It had often occurred to Gertrude, since her acquaintance with Lady Edith, how well she and the son of her early friend were adapted to each other: both singularly clever and amiable, and with much of the same spirit of romance.

Gertrude knew better than the world in general, the brightest parts of Mr. Poyntz's character,—his deep and ardent love for his mother, his generosity, his numerous acts of noble quiet benevolence; and she knew also the pure and honourable principles which ruled his every action. She admitted his eccentricity, and had wished it otherwise; but that was a mere speck on the bright face of the sun;—and she had travelled into Gloucestershire, in the full hope and belief, that she should see these two gifted persons, growing daily more and more aware of each other's perfections.

Lady Edith and Gertrude entered the saloon together. Some visitors from the neighbourhood were already there, and Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz. The two friends presented the most striking contrast to each other, and it was difficult to conceive how two people both so strikingly lovely, should be so different. Lady Edith looked the woman of high descent,—her dress, her jewels, her manners, her very mode of entering a

room, all proclaimed her of noble birth; but with Gertrude Walcot, it was different;—she too looked noble, but it was neither her attire, her ornaments, nor her manners. She dressed with the most scrupulous neatness, wore no ornaments,—her manner, though free and unembarrassed, and full of dignity, was quiet and unassuming, and whilst she impressed every one who beheld her with the certainty of her pretensions to respect and consideration, she herself appeared to be hardly aware of them. On the present occasion, she wore a plain robe of black crape, — for she was yet mourning the loss of her poor Catherine, —and in her hair (scarcely less black than her gown) shone some combs of jet. Her delicate health rendered her, if possible, still paler than usual, and but for the changing, ever-varying expression of that lovely face, that fact might have been urged against her as impairing her noble style of beauty. The eyes of Fitzroy rested intently on her, whilst all others were turned in admiration on her beautiful friend. Every exquisite statue he had ever seen,—the Cameo of Palermo, all passed in review before the mental vision of the son of Lady Mary, as he gazed on the perfect form of Gertrude Walcot. Again he forgot to look at the brilliant, fascinating daughter of Belmont, and the pressure of the small fair hand of the Duchess of Belton broke his reverie, and reminded him it was not statuary at which he was looking so intently, and that it was necessary to withdraw his deep gaze,—to turn to forms less pleasing perhaps, but who, as constituting part of Lady Mary's assembly of guests, required the notice and attention of her son. He immediately mixed with the party, and was all urbanity

and polite attention ; he conducted the duchess to the dining-room, and placed her on his right hand. She saw, to her annoyance, Miss Rose Digby, preparing to seat herself on the other side of Mr. Poyntz ; and speaking to Miss Walcot, who then entered with Colonel Montessor, (to whom, as an old friend of her father's she had been particularly introduced), she said, "Do, Miss Walcot, oblige me by sitting next my cousin, I shall be otherwise in the land of strangers." Gertrude immediately complied. The subjects, as is generally the case in the country, were chiefly local. The duchess maintained silence, unless when addressed, or when she found something good-natured and polite to say to Gertrude. Lady Edith was placed by the Duke of Belton, and for the second time that day, caught herself wondering how it was that Gertrude was again seated by Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz.

"I wish," said the duchess, (continuing a conversation she had begun with Gertrude)—"I wish you would join me at Brighton in November ; it is a place I think you would like."

"I wish indeed I could," rejoined Miss Walcot, "but in November I fear it will not be possible."

"Have you holidays only once a-year, then?" said Rose Digby, making one more bold effort to annoy "the governess."

"Only once," was the reply, uttered in a tone so calm, in a manner so perfectly unmoved, that the vulgar tormentor fancied she had been misunderstood.

The duchess raised her diamond mounted glass to her eye, and fixing it steadfastly on the insolent

daughter of Lady Carhampton, she said with provoking coolness,

“Your mamma granted holidays to her governess twice in the year, I suppose, in sympathising recollection of her own joyless youth ; it was very kind of her.”

The facts of Lady Carhampton having been governess to the only daughter of Lord Carhampton, and of her having acquired the title of wife by the most disgraceful preliminaries, were facts too well known not to render the bitter sarcasm of the warm-hearted little duchess perfectly intelligible. Lady Mary had been an attentive observer of the conduct of the Misses Digby, in two or three instances ; and though silent now, resolved to expostulate with them on the meanness and indelicacy of their behaviour, and if that failed, to recommend their immediate return to Cheltenham. The evening passed off as evenings after a large dinner generally do. Lady Edith sang a brilliant Italian song very beautifully, and Gertrude, “Jephtha’s daughter,” with a pathos so touching, as to cause the eyes of the singular Mr. Poyntz again to be riveted on her countenance. The duchess offered to play a set of quadrilles if the ladies liked to dance, — her good-natured proposal was negatived, and the carriages were soon after ordered. Thus ended another day at Tryst Hurst.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LETTERS from the Duke of Belmont were duly received at Tryst Hurst. In the one addressed to his daughter, his grace spoke in unreserved terms of his extreme disappointment at her rejection of a nobleman so every way eligible. He also lamented that error in Lady Edith which had suffered her to incur the odium of coquetry, by apparently, at least, encouraging addresses only to reject them. "These are times," continued his grace, "in which it is most important to add to our strength by every legitimate means within our reach, and admitting that the Marquis of Ellesmere were not exactly the man you would have selected, yet with your sense of the immense political advantage, and with a heart, disengaged as yours is, I should have anticipated,—I had indeed felt sure of a far different termination to my long-formed wishes." The letter ended, by desiring that the beginning of April should see Lady Edith established in Grosvenor Square, whither her aunt, the Lady Catherine, had preceded her. To Mrs. Halford, the duke expressed his concern at the frustration of his plan,—and it expressed more than that: he spoke in unmeasured terms of disapprobation of Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz, and of the very decided and somewhat violent part he

had taken in parliament during the past session ; he lamented the visit to Tryst Hurst, as throwing his wealthy and beautiful daughter within the sphere of one who was represented to be so infinitely fascinating, as he certainly was. "Time was," said the disappointed politician, "when I believed I might have trusted your pupil, my dear madam, in an affair of this importance, but after the late occurrence at Deerhurst, so every way mortifying to me, I trust no longer,—and the same spirit of romance which led her to refuse the man so desired by me as a son-in-law, may lead her to accept the very last man in the world whom I ever could be induced to receive in that character. I must entreat your vigilance to prevent a consummation so utterly repugnant to me."

The same cover conveyed answers to these letters.

Mrs. Halford again, modestly, but firmly, declared her determination of never interfering in an affair of this nature, and ventured to assure the duke that interference, in a matter which certainly so nearly concerned his daughter, never could do good, and, from the decided character of that young lady, might be productive of harm. Mrs. Halford spoke with her usual honest independence of Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz, and, forbearing to make any comment on his public career, represented him as every thing most amiable and good in private life. Lady Edith wrote as firmly as her friend, but far less mildly : she regretted her father's disappointment—defended herself from the charge of coquetry—and declared her intention never to sacrifice her own happiness to political interest,—and, with more feeling than prudence, lamented the part she had already taken on a subject which, it had

lately occurred to her, was one on which a woman knew but little, and with which she had still less to do.

The fine breezes of Gloucestershire had done their utmost for Miss Walcot, and the fair cheek of the "governess" told of renovated health and spirits; she was still pale and grave, but it was neither the paleness of delicate health, nor the gravity of dejection: her calm and well-regulated mind enabled her to enjoy, and find something to please everywhere. She heard constantly from Mrs. Elphinstone. That lady had been summoned to Lytton, in consequence of the increasing illness of Sir Charles Lyster; she had returned home, leaving her father (though better) still in a most precarious state of health. She gave a deplorable account of her wretched sister, Lady Frederick Howard, who had consummated her folly, by going off with Sir Charles Gray, with whom she was now openly living. Fanny wrote in terms of the warmest affection of her little nieces, and declared her intention of keeping with her the lovely deserted offspring of her miserable sister.

The days at Tryst Hurst passed pleasantly away,—riding, driving, and all sorts of rational amusement filled up the beautiful hours of spring. Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz rode, drove, and walked with his mother's guests; and, whilst the most fastidious observer would have been at a loss to point out in what part of good breeding he was deficient, he was singularly unobservant in all the ordinary modes of evincing *les bienséances du monde*. Lady Edith looked at him with wonder; she had, at length, and for the first time, met a man who deeply, painfully interested her,

—one, of whom she thought constantly—whose every word and look she remembered,—and this man was one who paid her no attention, who appeared never to see her, and who certainly rarely spoke to her. She sometimes found herself the occupant of the carriage he drove—occasionally they occupied the same sofa ; but, she felt it was never by design. To her, and other visitors, he was polite ; to the duchess, his good-humoured little cousin, he was gay and affectionate ; and, although there was nothing in his manner to Gertrude Walcot to strike a common beholder, yet, the low and singularly sweet tones in which he ever addressed her, with the peculiar smile which accompanied those tones, struck on the ears of the Lady Edith—dwelt on her memory with fearful tenacity. The high-born, haughty Edith acknowledged to herself, with anguish and bitter tears, she would have given up all her fortune, her high estate, for that beautiful smile, those melodious tones which were so quietly received, so coldly returned by the object on whom they were bestowed.

It was now April : the period, named by the duke for his daughter's journey to London, had arrived, and she still lingered. Time had passed rapidly away amid the quiet rational pleasures of Tryst Hurst, but not more rapid had been the flight of time, than had been the progress of love in the breast of the Lady Edith Clavering ; she loved—and, for the first time—with more than the ordinary devotion of her sex. Her enthusiastic feelings had not worn themselves out in the affairs of the heart, which are usually intermingled with all the amusements and employments of young ladies ; she had numbered nearly twenty-four

years, without admitting even a shade of preference,—now she loved deeply, devotedly, hopelessly. Fitzroy Poyntz gazed at her perhaps, and sometimes listened to her with admiration, but never with interest. She had, during the five weeks they had passed in the same house together, been placed in strong contrast with what he had long looked on as the image of perfection. The classic beauty of Gertrude Walcot,—her noble form, her simple attire, her quiet, unfashionable manners, with her superior mental acquirements, weighed far more with him, than all the birth, fortune, striking beauty, and talented superiority of the fashionable heiress of Belmont. He never, however, for one moment, imagined himself in love, nor was he supposed to be so by others, excepting only her, whose trembling observation had marked, with all a woman's quickness, those signs of love, never to be mistaken by the interested observer.

Préparations were now making for the departure of the Duke and Duchess of Belton, for their house in Belgrave Square. Their advent had been announced in the erudite columns of the Morning Post, and the day had arrived, on which was to commence the journey of this amiable pair; and, whilst waiting for the travelling carriage, the duchess once more folded her lovely babe to her bosom, and lamented the *necessity* of leaving him behind her.

“But, where, may I ask your grace,” said Gertrude, “lies the necessity of leaving your child? Why must you, for two or three months, forego the pure pleasures of maternal love, for the turmoil and

dissipation of London, and at this beautiful season too?"

"Spoken like a good, unfashionable girl," said the duchess, laughing. "My dear Miss Walcot," she continued, "these sacrifices, for such I admit them, to be, are the penalties we pay for rank and fashion. What would *the world* say, if her grace of Belton were to remain in the country, during the sunny months of May and June, to nurse her baby? No! I must go to insufferable dust and heat,—make my curtsy twice at St. James's,—show myself once a week in my box, at the opera,—run the risk of suffocation at a few balls,—and, after some other fashionable follies of the same sort, with impaired health and spirits, I shall return to Tryst Hurst, and claim my little Hartfield of his kind aunt.—Bless you, my child!" said the fond mother, as, imprinting kiss after kiss on the lips of her blooming boy, she resigned him to the arms of Gertrude; then turning, with tearful eyes, from the out-stretched arms of the child, and hastily making her adieux to those friends who, with real regret, saw her depart, she was conducted by Mr. Poyntz to her travelling carriage. The duke followed her, and, waving their hands to the party standing at the breakfast-room window, the word was given, and they were borne rapidly from the hospitable mansion of Lady Mary. They were sincerely regretted by all who remained behind;—the unaffected good humour of the duke, and the sweet and amiable character of the duchess (as elicited in various ways) had not failed to render them deservedly popular.

Fitzroy took the baby marquis from the arms of

his fair nurse, and, kissing him, exclaimed with much animation, turning to Lady Mary, "You must guard this sweet boy carefully, for his mother's sake, my dear madam. She is the very best little creature I have ever known. The sacrifice she has talked of, as being the penalty of her exalted rank, is in reality a sacrifice to the duty and affection she bears her husband ; it is solely at his request she has consented to leave her child."

"It is a nice point on which to decide," said Gertrude.

"But one on which there can be no doubt," said Lady Edith.

"Pardon me," returned the governess, "I think there may be,—that there is much doubt on the subject."

"It is a subject," said Mrs. Halford, laughing, "on which neither lady is competent to judge: we will, therefore, wave the discussion, and break the seals of those formidable packets, which Lady Mary has just taken from the bag."

A letter, from Lady Catherine Bingham, spoke strongly of the duke's impatience for the arrival of Lady Edith in town; and one, from Lady Emily Maitland, announced her ladyship's intention of being in Grosvenor-square, under the escort of her brother, early in the ensuing week. These despatches decided the wavering Edith, and the following Monday was fixed on, for herself and Mrs. Halford to travel towards those busy scenes—ever distasteful to the one, and now painfully so to the other. Edith sickened, as she anticipated a meeting with her father and with her rejected lover ; she dreaded too

the gaiety of her friend, Lady Emily,—and, oh!—more than all—she dreaded to think on the near approach of days, on which she should no longer listen to those tones, now “so familiar to her ear,”—when she should no longer see that beautiful smile which had sometimes beamed on her. However much the vanity of Lady Edith might have misled her on a former occasion, now, at least, she was not deceived by it; she might mistrust her own judgment in the matter of Mr. Poyntz’s attachment to Gertrude, but she felt perfectly persuaded she was, and ever should be, an object of indifference, if not of dislike, to this singular man. Immediate orders were given to have every thing in readiness for the journey to London, on the day after the morrow, and Edith, with a heavy heart, sought the stillness of her dressing-room. Mrs. Halford gazed after the receding form of her pupil, with tearful eyes. She wanted no stronger evidence than that her own observation had afforded her of the state of Edith’s heart. As she had long anticipated, and dreaded, she felt persuaded Edith’s warm affections were placed where her father most desired they never should be placed; and Mrs. Halford doubted whether the fact that these affections were clearly unreturned, were one at which to rejoice or lament; in either case, unhappiness awaited her beloved child. She, herself, could do nothing. For the first time, during nearly twenty years, Lady Edith had given her nightly kiss in haste and embarrassment to her beloved friend and early monitress, and without any of that confidential discourse which had invariably closed their happier days. She hastened to her own room, and sought refuge in

the presence of her waiting-woman, from the possible remark of Mrs. Halford.

The following day was Sunday.—The party, now reduced to six, had attended the services of the village church; and Edith, unusually depressed, and looking really ill, was found by Gertrude with her toilette only half completed, endeavouring to repress tears, which, *malgré* her efforts, were fast falling through the delicate fingers which shaded her eyes.

“My dear, dear Lady Edith!” exclaimed Gertrude, on thus beholding her friend, “what is the matter?—tell me, I beseech you;” she continued, seating herself on the couch beside the weeping girl:—“tell me, not only the cause of these tears, but of that depression of spirit visible at Elphinstone, but which, during the last five weeks, has so rapidly increased.—Can you not confide in me?—You will not find a more faithful confidante.”

“No, no;” exclaimed Edith; “of that I am aware, none more faithful than yourself, Gertrude; and, perhaps, none to whom I could so reluctantly disclose my secret, (if I have a secret,)—but no; I am ill:—do not ask me; I cannot say more.”

“You have admitted there is a secret cause for this distress,” returned Miss Walcot; “and why, my sweet friend, am I the last person in whose breast you could confide it?”

“Because,” rejoined Edith, “I dread your opinion of me,—I dread, lest the severity of your own rigid sense of propriety should lead you to add another wound, where well I know you cannot heal. Leave

me, dear, dear Gertrude, and forget what you have witnessed."

Without being importunate, Gertrude resolved not to quit Edith until she had elicited that which might enable her to offer some consolation,—to devise a remedy for grief, of which the cause was totally unsuspected. She argued long with Edith, and to her utter surprise heard, from the lips of the trembling girl, a confession of love, unsought, unreturned;—her look of astonishment told a bitter tale to Edith.

"Yes, I knew it would be so;—you condemn, despise, perhaps, hate me."

"Neither one nor the other," returned Gertrude; "but is it possible you really love Mr. Poyntz, and that without—" She paused.

"Yes, I know all you would say,—without having received from him the common attention due to my rank.—But you have wrung from me my disgraceful secret: guard it," she said, almost sternly, "as you value the peace, nay, the very life of your broken-hearted friend."

Much conversation followed.—Gertrude consoled and re-assured her unhappy companion; and, by her calm and judicious reasoning, restored her to composure, at least sufficient to enable her, with the aid of *eau-de-cologne*, to finish dressing, and be in readiness to join the small party for the last time perhaps they would ever *all meet* again. To the well-regulated mind of the "governess," it appeared scarcely credible, that a young woman of superior education, should for a moment suffer herself to become attached to one, who had evinced no previous

interest in her; and still more incredible, or rather strange, (for she had evidence, too convincing, of the fact,) that the high sense of delicacy ever evinced by Lady Edith, should not of itself be sufficient to overcome what her own heart must condemn.

Some of my readers will be disposed to look on Gertrude as a cold reasoner; but, be it remembered, she preached ever what she did,—or, in similar cases, would practise; and she was, besides, four years older than Lady Edith, and at eight-and-twenty, a woman as devoid of romance as my heroine, sees things through the sober eye of reason. There were many situations into which Edith might have been thrown, in which she would have admirably acquitted herself; but there was not one in which Gertrude could have been called to play a part, without being distinguished for that conduct and dispassionate reasoning, which are so essential to the safe passage of all (more particularly of a woman) through life.

The last dinner-bell summoned the ladies to the drawing-room: as usual, they presented a striking contrast; but it was no longer the pale cheek of the “governess” which contrasted so strongly with the blooming countenance of the beautiful heiress of Belmont. Gertrude’s usual placid demeanour had given place to a look of anxiety and agitation never before observable in her, and it was *her* cheek which was flushed;—Edith, pale and exhausted from recent emotions, literally leaned for support on the arm of her friend. The party were all assembled, and for the first time, Fitzroy Poyntz looked at Edith Clavering with interest. Dinner was immediately announced, and he led her to a seat next himself

at the table: the meal was a silent one, and the ladies returned very soon to the drawing-room. Gertrude withdrew immediately to her own apartment, and Lady Mary and Mrs. Halford to the nursery, to take their nightly farewell of the little Marquis of Hartfield.—Edith remained alone,—a fire blazed in the grate, but the glass doors which opened on to the terrace were unclosed; for it was one of those soft and balmy evenings of early spring, which sometimes visit even this northern climate.

Edith went on to the terrace, and looked with a mournful feeling on scenes she was, too probably, quitting for ever:—the moon was up, and by its mild light gave added beauty to the scenery which on all sides presented itself. The unhappy girl walked to the extremity of the terrace, and leaned against one of the pillars, around which an early flower was already climbing;—she shed tears of sorrow, not unmingled with shame,—as she surveyed in her mind's eye the dreary future:—London, her father, the once dear and beautiful Belmont, all presented subjects for regret and painful anticipation;—even the image of her chosen, long-tried Mrs. Halford, appeared to her distorted vision only as one to be feared and shunned; she knew her acute powers of observation, her inflexible principle of right, and she dreaded both. A footstep approaching awoke her from her painful reverie; she looked up, and beheld Fitzroy within a few steps of her,—to avoid him was impossible; she trusted to the imperfect light, to conceal from him the traces of tears she knew were but too visible.

“Lady Edith!” he exclaimed, “here, and alone,

and daring the damps of the night air,—and that, too, labouring, as I am sure you are, under considerable indisposition! Let me intreat you to return to the house, and consult my mother; she is an admirable doctress.”

As he said this, he drew the arm of Edith within his own, and led her towards the door by which she had quitted the house:—they entered the drawing-room; it was still empty, but lights had been placed there, and Fitzroy saw, with amazement, the pale, tearful countenance of the beautiful Edith.—Could he, too, have seen her heart at that moment, would he have dried, and for ever, those fast-falling tears which now so shocked him? I cannot answer for what he would have done; as it was, he realized one of poor Edith’s fondest wishes, namely,—that he might once address her in those low and melodious accents, in which he occasionally addressed Gertrude Walcot. Now he spoke to her in his softest, kindest tones: he placed her on a low chair by the fire, and pressing one chill, white hand in his own, intreated her to compose herself, and to tell if it were mental or bodily disease, which so painfully distressed her.—“Shall I,” he continued, “call Miss Walcot, or may I conduct you to Mrs. Halford?”

“Oh, no!” exclaimed the still weeping girl, “do not let Miss Walcot see me;—only assist me to reach my room, and there let me rest quiet and alone.” She arose as she spoke, and Fitzroy seeing her incapability of walking unsupported, placed his arm round her waist, and rather carried than led her up stairs. In the gallery he saw an old female domestic of the family, and consigning his lovely burthen to her care,

with a request that he might be informed of any amendment in Lady Edith's health, he added, in a low voice, "Don't keep me in suspense, but let me hear quickly that you are better."

On the following morning, the party met at breakfast. Lady Edith, though still pale, conversed cheerfully with Lord John;—and Mr. Poyntz having ascertained that her ladyship was considerably better, appeared to have forgotten the events of the preceding evening, at least he no longer betrayed by voice or look, the interest he certainly had felt.

Lady Edith performed her part admirably during breakfast, but the sound of her carriage-wheels destroyed the equanimity she had so hardly acquired,—tears "unbidden" rushed to her eyes,—the announcement that "all was ready" came. She took a hurried but affectionate leave of Lady Mary Poyntz: threw herself for one moment into the arms of Gertrude, and not trusting herself to look at the gentlemen, to whom she only bowed, she left the room, and was at the bottom of the long flight of steps, and had entered her carriage unassisted, before the quiet Mrs. Halford had made her adieux, or Lord John had recovered from his astonishment at her precipitate and unexpected exit.

Mr. Poyntz conducted Mrs. Halford to the carriage; and placing her in it, walked round to the window, at which Lady Edith was seated, and taking her offered hand, he expressed a hope that when next he met her ladyship, it might be in renovated health. Edith essayed to speak;—but words came not at her bidding, and she only bent to Mr. Poyntz.—He gave the word, and Lady Edith Clavering was rapidly

conveyed from a spot where, in five little weeks, her fate had been so cruelly decided. She arrived in town in time for the paper of Wednesday to announce to her friends at Tryst Hurst, the arrival of "Lady Edith Clavering and suite, at the mansion of the Duke of Belmont, in Grosvenor Square."

CHAPTER XXIX.

LADY EDITH'S departure for London was commented on in various ways by those she left behind. Lady Mary lamented the impaired state of health which had been so visible for some time past; but trusted that the gaieties of London would quickly restore her lost animation. She commented, too, on her extreme beauty and amiability. In her last remark, she was joined by Gertrude, who descanted warmly on the many charms and virtues of her fair friend; and in doing this she could not refrain from looking to the spot where Fitzroy had seated himself after returning from his farewell with Lady Edith. Nothing, however, in that gentleman's manner tended to confirm Gertrude's hopes of at least a look of approbation of her departed friends; he was as busily engaged in cutting the leaves of the "Quarterly Review," as if his life depended on their being all cut by a certain period; and the excessive desire he manifested

to cut them straight, clearly proved that Lady Edith was not in his thoughts. In fact, she was not:—the recollection of her never with him survived her actual presence:—in illness and in tears she had interested him once: his kindly feelings were touched, but Lady Edith well, and gay and beautiful, would ever be an object of indifference to Fitzroy Poyntz.

In another week, Gertrude returned to Elphinstone. Her friend Lady Mary, conveyed her one day's journey in her own carriage, when one from Elphinstone met her, and in the middle of the second day, she found herself once more at home. Her welcome was warm and sincere: Mr. Elphinstone received her with real pleasure, and Fanny and her children crowded round her 'ere she had reached the room to which she was hastening. They all looked well and blooming, and were impatient to assure her of their good conduct during her absence.

One day was given to mutual inquiries, and then the "governess" resumed her duties with as much composure and cheerfulness as if they had been those she had been born only to perform. From Mrs. Elphinstone she heard of the rapidly declining health of Sir Charles Lyster, and that it was in contemplation, if no material change for the better took place, to summon Mr. Lyster from Geneva, where he was now supposed to have arrived. In the beginning of May letters were received from him. In the one addressed to his favourite sister, he spoke of his health and spirits as considerably better: he requested her to bear his kindest regard to their mutual friend, adding, "My heart is buried for ever in the grave of my poor Catherine: could woman ever more have touched it, that

woman would have been Gertrude Walcot. Tell me, in your next, is there any truth in the report of her engagement with Poyntz, of Tryst Hurst? do not omit to tell me this."

Fanny smiled; her memory furnished her with more than one heart that had been "buried," but which had eventually done very well in this nether world.

Very soon after the reception of this letter, an express was brought from Lytton, which stated that the baronet had been seized with apoplexy, and that his speedy dissolution might be apprehended. Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone immediately left home, and on arriving at Lytton, found Sir Charles still alive; but although he lingered a week after the arrival of his daughter and her husband, he expired three days before the new baronet could possibly be expected.

A magnificent funeral, in accordance with Lady Lyster's love of display, rather than as a memento of affection, was given to the mortal remains of Sir Charles Lyster;—as a baronet of ancient lineage,—as member for the county, and above all, as a kind and liberal landlord, he was attended to his last home by a long train of followers.

Fanny had ever loved her father, and was sensibly affected at his death. The cold-hearted countess of Oakeley declared herself incapable of mingling in the melancholy ceremonial, and retired for a month to Twickenham, lamenting more the necessity of postponing her ball, and losing a drawing-room than the death of a weak but affectionate father.

Sir Charles certainly was a weak man, for he submitted to a violent and tyrannical woman; but he was

an amiable and a just man. He had been deeply shocked by the disgraceful conduct of his favourite daughter ; but the last act of his hours of health and reason evinced how affectionately he still felt for her, and how truly he understood her wretched situation. He left ten thousand pounds in the hands of Mr. Elphinstone, the interest of which was to be paid regularly to this unhappy child of sin and misery ; and at her death to revert to her two little girls.

Sir Herbert Lyster found himself in possession of a clear and unencumbered estate of twelve thousand pounds a year. Any intercourse with his mother was so extremely painful to him, that, after making arrangements with his steward, which, owing to the regular and methodical habits of his late father, were extremely simple, he requested an interview with Lady Lyster. They met, on her part, with coldness and constraint,—for an offender never forgives ; and even the intimation of her son, that he had given orders for an immediate and very ample addition to be made to her income, failed to call forth any evidence of kindly feeling from the haughty and unamiable mother. To her son's request, that she would remain so long as suited her convenience as mistress of Lytton, she coldly thanked him, and announced her intention of going to town as soon as the necessary preparations could be made for her departure.

Sir Herbert Lyster's health and spirits were certainly much improved ; but his natural indolence of character prevented his acceding to the request of the late baronet's constituents, that he would allow himself to be proposed for the county ; and taking a cold

and formal leave of his mother, he left Lytton for Elphinstone, where, if it must be owned, his wishes had for some time pointed.

Five months had elapsed since the death of Lady Trevor, and each succeeding day found him less disposed to dwell on the recollection of the buried Catherine, and to think more of the beautiful and intellectual Gertrude. "And this is man's fidelity!" I hear some fair reader exclaim. It is so; I allow it to be very shocking and very unsentimental; but such ever must be the result of affection misplaced, cherished in defiance of law and of religion. Nothing remaining to sanctify or even excuse such fidelity, it follows of course that it will yield to time and reason.

Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone had returned to their own happy home as soon as the family vault had closed over the remains of the late baronet; and in the month of June were followed thither by Sir Herbert Lyster. The baronet had arrived within a short distance of Elphinstone; he had reached the gate which had six months before admitted him under such melancholy auspices to the mansion of Sir John Trevor; he remembered each minute particular of his dismal drive thither; but the fair image of his companion was remembered too. He dwelt on the recollection of the closing scene around the death-bed of his early love, but he dwelt longer on the recollection of the good and virtuous woman who had, by her judicious reasoning, soothed the bitterness of that death-bed, and who had rendered the last moments of his once cherished Catherine blissful to her, and

salutary to him. He drove in at the gates of Elphinstone, and entered that magnificent avenue which, a few short months before, he had quitted with such different feelings: verdure and rich foliage and sunshine were around him, and in spite of himself sunshine was within his own breast. He tried to linger more on the past, but it would not do; bright anticipation, smiling hope, were the only companions of the last moments of his drive.

Fanny and her friend appeared for an instant at an open window, and in the next he was receiving the affectionate welcome of his sister, the kindly and not wholly unembarrassed greeting of the "governess." He looked at her, and her usually pale cheek glowed with a deeper hue than he had ever before seen there; it certainly did not detract from her beauty. It became necessary for Fanny to remind him the dinner hour was seven, and that the chapel clock had some minutes before sounded six. The somewhat boisterous entrance of his numerous little relatives no longer annoyed him, and whilst he commented on their being much less noisy than formerly, they were charmed with the "extreme" good humour of Uncle Herbert.

Mr. Elphinstone was from home, and there were no guests in the house; the trio sat down to their social dinner, one of the pleasantest, Sir Herbert thought, he had ever been present at within the walls of Elphinstone. It had been decided, that in July, the whole family were to proceed to Belmont, to pay their promised visit to the Duke of Belmont and his fair daughter;—there they were to remain

until the latter end of August, to give Mr. Elphinstone some northern grouse-shooting, and then return *via* Lytton to Elphinstone.

"Then," said the baronet, "you will find me a solitary hopeless recluse."

"Not a hopeless one, certainly," said Fanny, laughing; "and as there are yet some weeks to September, probably not a solitary one."

Once more a bright flush, which lasted but for a moment, passed over the fine face of the governess. Herbert looked at her; their eyes met, and Catherine Heathcote, if not quite forgotten, was remembered only as the link which had first drawn them together, and as one whose last wishes, whose last prayers, had been breathed for their mutual and individual happiness.

Ten days after Herbert's arrival at Elphinstone, he ventured to declare his love, his hopes, to Gertrude Walcot. She listened to him calmly; and with that admirable taste, which guided all her words and actions, received his declaration, and unaffectedly offered him her own pure affection in return.

Mrs. Elphinstone delightedly embraced her as her future sister; and it was decided that Gertrude's journey to Belmont should be given up;—that she should go for some weeks to her friend, Lady Jane Spencer, who had long importuned her to visit her, and meet Mrs. Elphinstone on her return home in September. And the lover declared, that nothing could be more correct, than that their marriage should take place before the expiration of that month.

"Just to prove the truth of my surmise," said Fanny, "that your case was not absolutely hopeless,

and that before September had passed away, you might not be solitary."

"You are an admirable little *diseuse de bonne aventure*, my pretty little sister," said Herbert, affectionately kissing her; "and how fortunate for me that my lady mother did not choose to retain her dignities at Lytton!"

"Yes, indeed," replied Fanny; "she thought us ever terribly degenerate,—what will she say to her new daughter?"

"Nothing," said the baronet: "my mind is made up on that score; she has insulted her too grossly as your governess, ever to behave properly to her as my wife."

To Lady Mary Poyntz only was the announcement of Gertrude's engagement formally made. Some posts elapsed without bringing any reply to what, it was believed, would have given unqualified pleasure to her ladyship. At length a letter, franked by Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz, was presented to Gertrude; it began as follows:—

"It is impossible, my ever dear Gertrude, to paint the feelings of mingled pain and pleasure with which I read your letter. It surprised me too. Sir Herbert Lyster, I believed still grieving for his cousin, and you yet unscathed. But I forget the fickleness of man's nature, and that too great reserve in yourself, which, if I could believe you otherwise than perfect, I should deem a fault. I do not know the object of your choice, but I am sure you are incapable of making a bad, or a mercenary one, and I rejoice from my inmost soul, at your bright prospects; but whilst I rejoice for my friend, I grieve for my son. Ger-

trude, you are the early, the sole object of his deep, fond devotion. An attachment formed at your first meeting here some time back, unsuspected even by me, has been the stimulus to all those extraordinary exertions Fitzroy has long been making, and which will at no distant period, procure for him distinctions to which his talents, and his industry, so justly entitle him. After my return from conveying you to ———, my son confided to me the long buried secret of his love, and we had decided on the propriety of my obtaining your permission to his addressing you; for with all a true lover's doubt, he dreaded a rejection from your own lips.

"You will perhaps wonder why I have thought it necessary to tell you all this, now that I am aware how useless such a communication is. It was Fitzroy's own request,—'Tell her this, and also, that next to her love, I shall most prize her friendship.' These were his last words, as he stepped into the carriage which was to convey him to London."

There was little more in the letter,—nothing to interest my readers. Gertrude almost doubted the evidence of her senses, as she perused the contents of her friend's epistle. How strangely, she thought, do mankind play at cross-purposes, one with the other;—"would, I could transfer the affection of this good and gifted man, to my poor Edith. But I,—no, I never could have loved him." She did not deem it necessary to inform her lover, or Mrs. Elphinstone, of the unexpected communication of Lady Mary. A communication, she could not forbear thinking, would have been better avoided.

In a few days, she removed to Hastings, where

Lady Jane Spencer, had taken a house, and where she could remain until the first week in September, when she was to rejoin Mrs. Elphinstone. It was decided, that nothing should be said on the subject to Lady Lyster, until absolutely necessary. Mr. Elphinstone and Sir Herbert accompanied Miss Walcot to town, where she remained only one night at the house of Mrs. Daubeney, her aunt, and proceeded, attended by two of the Elphinstone servants, to Hastings.

The baronet, with all the feelings of a happy lover, took possession of his beautiful property, amidst much sincere rejoicing. And, as yet, his intended marriage remained a secret. I must now retrace my steps, and follow the lovely heiress of Belmont to the gaieties and fascinations of London. She was, soon after her own arrival there, joined by Lady Emily Maitland, and the fair friends were speedily plunged into the vortex of dissipation. And Lady Edith found herself in her sixth season, still an object of intense admiration.

The meeting between the Duke of Belmont, and his daughter, was by him purposely delayed until it would take place in a crowded drawing room. And during the first month she was in town, they never once met *tête-à-tête*. With Lady Emily as her guest, it was impossible that Edith should avoid seeing the Marquis of Ellesmere. He dined in Grosvenor Square, —appeared in her ladyship's box at the Opera—rode by her side in the Park. The world occasionally hinted, or even talked of his close attendance, but the eyes of Lady Edith were opened, and she now *felt* the difference of his manners at Deerhurst, and in London: but all was dull and irksome to her,

except the hour in which she could, without observation, devour the paper containing the fullest account of the speech of the honourable member for ———, and the few minutes occupied in driving home through Parliament Street, by which she generally contrived her drive should terminate. Once in passing the Horse Guards, she saw Mr. Poyntz ; he was arm in arm with Sir Robert P——, and was proceeding to the house. Even could he have guessed, that the magnificent carriage which passed him, bore the ducal coronet and the elaborate emblazonments of Belmont, he would scarcely have raised his head to see who occupied it : as it was, he did not once look up ; and Lady Edith had the satisfaction only, if satisfaction it could be called, of knowing he was in town.

After that, the papers, as I have stated, and her daily drive were all that interested her. Sometimes she fancied he loved Gertrude Walcot,—at others, that his conduct to her on the last night of their being together at Tryst Hurst, betrayed some interest ; *her* general feeling, however, was that of extreme unhappiness : listless and dispirited, she entered largely into company ; appeared at the drawing-room ; gave large and very splendid parties at home ; attended those of other people ; and her box at the opera was once or twice a-week the centre of attraction. Mr. Poyntz, she had never met in public ; she saw his name as attending political dinners, but in the parks and other places of public resort he never was to be seen. One hope remained,—that he would be present at a ball which was to be given by the Duchess of Belton, his amiable little cousin. The duke remarked

the altered appearance of his darling child, and his heart softened towards her; he also observed the visits of the Marquis of Ellesmere, and remarked to Mrs. Halford one morning that they met alone at the breakfast table, that his lordship seemed to have forgotten Lady Edith's rejection, whilst her ladyship was certainly not indisposed to receive his attentions.

"I suppose," continued the duke, "the marquis remembers the old adage, that 'faint heart never won fair lady.' I may yet see my favourite wish realized."

"I cannot," said Mrs. Halford, "suffer your grace so to deceive yourself. The marquis, I am sure, has not the slightest intention of ever renewing his proposals to Lady Edith, and if he were so infatuated, he would still find his suit hopeless."

Mrs. Halford said this with so much earnestness, as to give the duke room to imagine "more was meant than met the ear."

The entrance of Lady Emily Maitland, however, fortunately precluded the continuance of a topic that might somewhat have puzzled Mrs. Halford. She well knew that the Marquis of Ellesmere was more than ever an object of indifference to Edith, and she also could account but too truly for the delicate cheek which sometimes attracted observation from the duke or Lady Catherine.

I am too near the close of my little book, to introduce fresh characters to my readers, or I should like to have given the sister of his grace of Belmont a more prominent part in these pages. Suffice it to say, that, good and amiable as the duke, she was also as prejudiced on many points. She remembered the marriage of her brother, how happy a one it proved,

although the youthful duchess had had no voice in the selection of her husband. She had married Colonel Bingham because she loved him, and against the will of her father, and had been an unhappy wife. From these two facts, she drew her argument, that Lady Edith ought most certainly to have married the Marquis of Ellesmere; but having expressed this as her opinion to her niece, she troubled herself no farther, as nothing could have persuaded her of the possibility of Lady Edith forming, or desiring to form, any connection, not according to the fitness of things, or against her father's wishes.

The evening of the Duchess of Belton's ball arrived, and Edith's cheek glowed with rich bloom, and her light footstep was even more elastic as she dwelt on the possibility, nay, the probability, that she should in two or three hours, behold once more, once more be addressed by, the son of Lady Mary Poyntz. She remembered hearing him say at Tryst Hurst, that he never went to any parties except those of his cousin. Hope, therefore, had become certainty, and she prepared to dress with a readiness which surprised all but the observant Mrs. Halford, and submitted to it with a degree of patience which charmed her waiting-woman, who had recently had but too much cause for complaint at the indifference, to say the least of it, manifested by her lady, as to the minutiae of her toilet. On this occasion, the consultation had been long and profound, and certainly the result eminently successful. Lady Edith Clavering had never appeared more exquisitely lovely than on descending to the saloon, where the duke and Lady Emily, with Lord Graham, (who had arrived in town a few days before), were

waiting to escort her to Belgrave Square. She looked the noble, high-born woman, but there was a softness, a stillness, about her, which she sometimes wanted. The duke gazed at her with admiration and delight.

"You look attired for conquest," said Lady Catherine, kissing the lovely cheek of her niece; "who is the destined victim of to-night?"

"Victim! my dear aunt," said Edith, laughing, "victims, you mean. However, I shall be content with—" "very small spoil," she would have added, but checking herself, she added, "good night, my dear aunt; I will tell you all my secrets to-morrow morning."

"And will you not tell them to me, too?" whispered Mrs. Halford, as she kissed the beautiful Edith.

Edith started, and her gaiety forsook her. What did Mrs. Halford mean? had she penetrated her secret? did she know her unhappiness? The announcement of her carriage prevented her dwelling for more than a moment on the painful idea that Mrs. Halford had guessed what was passing in her mind. Poor Lady Edith! she had shut her own eyes, and like a child, she fancied no one saw her.

The party was long in reaching even the crowded stairs of the Duchess of Belmont, and still longer before they made their way to the principal rooms. Such a crowd of blond and white satin, such a blaze of jewels, and such exclamations, as would have delighted the most decided rout-giver in London. But all was unheeded by the Lady Edith. Borne along on her father's arm, she cared little either for crowd or exclamation; her eyes wandered restlessly over the different groups who had preceded them, and

who were slowly advancing; but she saw not the object of her anxious gaze. At length the principal apartment was gained, and by great good fortune, the little duchess approached the spot where the duke and his party were standing.

Lady Edith's hand was claimed by her grace for Lord George Graylove, her brother-in-law. The second dance was danced with the Marquis of Ellesmere, and was completed without the great object of her wishes being attained: she had not seen Fitzroy Poyntz. The heat was excessive, and she begged the marquis to conduct her to a cooler room; she had entered it only a moment, when she discovered the object of her secret solicitude standing in earnest conversation with Lord Graham. She looked intently at them; Lord Graham saw her; he said a few words to Mr. Poyntz, and on preparing to leave him, he added,—“Are you fortunate enough to know the most beautiful, and the richest woman in London? if not, come with me, and I will present you.”

“As no one presents herself at once to my recollection, under so alluring a form, I conclude I have not that pleasure,” said Fitzroy, smiling. “I will see her if you please; a presentation would be useless to such a non-fashionable as I am.”

Lord Graham led him towards Lady Edith, who, in speaking to a lady of her acquaintance, had turned her face from the direction in which they were approaching. The voice of Lord Graham caused her again to turn her head, and Fitzroy Poyntz stood before her. She started, and was alternately white and red. This excited no observation, and to Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz's quiet — “Oh! Lady Edith Cla-

vering!" Lord Graham exclaimed, "Then you do know Lady Edith? Why, but a moment since, you confessed yourself unacquainted with her ladyship."

"I certainly did not immediately recognize Lady Edith in your words; but I am, as I said, too little of a fashionist to decide whether your description be correct or not. I can only say I am very happy to see her ladyship again."

He bowed low as he spoke, and, Lord Graham intimating a wish for some conversation with his brother-in-law, the Marquis of Ellesmere, Edith was thrown on the politeness of Mr. Poyntz. He begged to conduct her to a seat, remarking, "that if she were as unwell as when she quitted Gloucestershire, the heat and noise of the evening were but too likely to overpower her; but," he continued, looking at her with evident admiration, "your looks contradict the idea of your being an invalid. London has done wonders for your ladyship!" Edith made no reply; and Mr. Poyntz went on—"I never dance; but do not let me be the means of preventing your joining the next quadrille."

"Thank you," murmured Edith, "I am tired, and prefer sitting still."

"Then, in firm reliance on your word, I shall enjoy the great pleasure of conversing with your ladyship a few minutes."

Fitzroy then began a low and (to her) an interesting conversation; his opinions on all subjects were rather singular, and very unlike those of other men. Music, beauty, heat, and noise were alike disregarded by Edith; she saw and heard only the one being by

whom she was seated, and who continued to talk almost unanswered, until a general movement in those around them indicated that the doors of the supper rooms were thrown open.

Who is there, amongst my female readers, who has not wished, planned, and ~~been occasionally disappointed~~ on the all-important matter of being led down to supper. Happy Edith! she too had wished, and she was *not* disappointed; she was conducted down stairs by the man she loved, and by him carefully, almost tenderly guarded through the crowded galleries, which led to the equally crowded stairs; but she knew not the exquisite feeling and kindness of Fitzroy's nature, and that he would, with similar care, have watched Lady Catherine Bingham through the intricacies of a London rout, as that with which he so fascinated her beautiful niece;—more than this,—she knew not the extent of his love and devotion for one far away from this scene of gaiety.

It mattered not, Edith was happy, far beyond her expectation, happy,—and the most unwelcome sound which ever broke on her ear, was that which told her that “the Duke of Belmont's carriage stopped the way,” and immediately after, the duke, with Lady Emily, and a gentleman, approached to state their readiness to attend the first summons, which had been her ladyship's wish at every previous party during the season. Now she could gladly have dispensed with their kind punctuality, but her companion directly seconded the duke's proposal for going, by declaring his intention of leading Lady Edith to her carriage; to this, the duke could only reply by one of his very courteous bows, and in a few

minutes Edith found herself seated with her father and Lady Emily,—the long anticipated evening gone,—and a bright sun struggling to make himself seen. Few words passed during the drive home, but the brow of the politician was clouded, Lady Emily supposed with fatigue. Edith observed it not,—her eyes were closed, and the past events were chasing each other rapidly through her mind: those of the evening were on the whole pleasing in the retrospect, but they tended only to confirm more strongly in Edith's mind the conviction, that, in Fitzroy Poyntz, she had seen the only man she ever could receive as her husband. The ladies were too tired to talk on their arrival in Grosvenor Square: the beautiful, highly gifted mistress of the mansion retired to bed, but not to rest,—sleep came not to her eyes; but it was the restlessness of comparative happiness that kept her waking. Lady Emily Maitland, careless and happy, was quickly divested of her splendid attire, and speedily found the refreshing slumber she sought.

On the following morning the party were more disposed to talk over the past evening. Lady Edith gave a gay account to her aunt and Mrs. Halford, of the brilliancy of the scene, the beauty of the guests, and the excellence of one of Gunter's best suppers; of the latter, however, she, in fact, remembered only that her ices had been presented to her by Fitzroy Poyntz, and that the sparkling champagne had been quaffed at his request.

"*Apropos*, of supper," said Lady Emily, interrupting her friend,—“Who was it you were stationed next to so long, and who led you to the carriage?—A

little plain man!" she said, not receiving an immediate answer.

"I suppose you mean Mr. Poyntz, the member for ——," said Edith, a deep blush suffusing her face, whilst she endeavoured to speak and look perfectly unembarrassed.

"Mr. Poyntz!" exclaimed Lady Emily; "the son of your friend, Lady Mary. Oh, that is Mr. Poyntz, is it!—he is reckoned very clever, is he not?"

"Yes, very," said Edith; "have you never read his speeches—they are always given at full length."

"No! I never read any body's speeches; but, what is he, a Whig or Tory?"

"The determined and violent opposer of every just and liberal measure brought forward within the walls of the House of Commons," said the Duke, looking up from the pages of the Morning Chronicle.

"Then, according to your grace's creed, I must write him Tory!" continued Lady Emily, laughing. "Does he ever visit here, may I ask?"

"Never," said the Duke; "I don't know him!"

Poor Edith had cut a piece of the shell of her egg into the smallest possible particles, whilst these few words were passing. Lady Emily saw, by the expression (not placid) of her face, and the distressed look of Mrs. Halford, that the subject of the honourable member for ——, was not altogether an agreeable one, and asked Edith if she were not engaged to ride with the Marquis of Ellesmere at three o'clock. She replied she had intended riding, but that the day promised to be so extremely oppressive, she should desire her excuses might be made to the marquis.

"It were well," said the Duke, pettishly, "if your ladyship, in making these engagements, decided at the same time at what degree of Fahrenheit you should feel at liberty to break them."

Lady Emily here commenced reading aloud, from the *Morning Post*, an elaborate account of the ball at the Duchess of Belton's; and the Duke's horse being announced, he left the room in no very placid mood. He returned in a moment, and told his daughter he had forgotten to inform her that he had seen Lord de Lisle the previous day, and had offered him two seats in her opera-box, for that evening. Lady Edith bowed assent, and, on the duke closing the door, she said—"Does the Duke mean that two chairs are to be reserved for his huge lordship, or are we to expect the pleasure of a companion?"

"Probably the latter," said Lady Catherine; "but, my dear Edith," she continued, "would it not be better if you did keep your engagement with the Marquis of Ellesmere?—I do not think the heat will be so very overpowering three hours hence."

"Perhaps not, my dear aunt; but I am not disposed to ride to-day,—I will, therefore, order the carriage at four, and visit the Duchess of Belton. Will your ladyship accompany me?" she said, turning to Lady Emily.

"I think not," was the reply. "I must endeavour to console Alfred for your defection, and dare the heat and dust with him."

It was then decided that Mrs. Halford should be the companion of Lady Edith's drive to Belgrave Square, and indeed of her visit to the duchess, who had politely left her card for Mrs. Halford. The

next two or three hours were employed by Lady Edith in writing to Gertrude Walcot, and in arranging a splendid fête, which was to be given on the 30th of May, in honour of her (Lady Edith's) birthday, and for which cards, in profusion, were already issued. At three o'clock she saw Lady Emily in her riding dress, preparing to accompany her brother, and at four she entered her carriage, with Mrs. Halford, and desired to be driven to Belgrave Square. She found the duchess at home, but so indisposed, from the fatigue of the previous night, that all visitors had been denied access to her; but the duke, who was leaving the house as Lady Edith's carriage drove up, ventured to make an exception in her favour, and conducted her ladyship and Mrs. Halford to the morning room of her grace. They entered, in expectation of seeing only the duchess, but, to the surprise of both ladies, Mr. Poyntz was the sole occupant of the boudoir.

"Where is Agnes?" asked the duke, looking around, "a moment since, I left her here."

"And, scarcely a moment since, she quitted the room, promising to return almost immediately," replied Mr. Poyntz.

"Then to your care I commit these ladies, until her return," said his grace, bowing his farewell to them.

Fitzroy expressed much pleasure at again meeting Mrs. Halford, who was one of the very few women whose quiet and unpretending good sense had caused her to be remembered by this fastidious and eccentric man. He confined his conversation exclusively to her, until the entrance of his cousin. The duchess

looked pale, and evidently much fatigued; she regretted this, as she had particularly desired being present at the opera of that evening, to witness a new performance, from which much was expected. She asked if Lady Edith's party were made up for the evening, as otherwise she should like to transfer Fitzroy to her box, he having confidently relied on a seat with her; but the duke, not being aware of the arrangement, had given the box to Hookham, for his disposal, in return for some act of kindness from that gentleman. Lady Edith blushing assented to the half-made proposal of the duchess, and Mr. Poyntz, to whom the exchange of boxes was one of neither pain nor pleasure, silently acquiesced in the plan made for him. Mrs. Halford looked with surprise at Edith, but her ladyship deemed it better not to observe it. They talked of the ball past, and the one to come, and Mrs. Halford fully expected to hear some arrangement made for the important 30th, which should see Mr. Poyntz one of the guests of the evening. She remembered the duke's irritable remarks, on the mention of his name, in the morning, and she dreaded the effects of Lady Edith's rashness, and her evidently increasing determination to consult her own wishes only in the affair. Well, too, she knew the load of misery and disappointment she was treasuring up for herself, for, since the last night passed at Tryst Hurst, it was evident that the one absorbing feeling ruled her every action. Of Fitzroy's indifference to her there could not be the slightest doubt, from the observation she had made; but, in addition to this, Lady Mary Poyntz had hinted to her, her new-born suspicion, that her son was be-

coming daily more alive to the perfections of Gertrude Walcot; the mother then little imagining how soon she was to hear from his own lips a confirmation of those hopes, and how soon they were to be blighted. The lively conversation of the duchess prevented Mrs. Halford dwelling long on painful themes; but she mentally resolved to take a very early opportunity of speaking to her pupil on the subject which gave her so much pain. Lady Edith found her visit so agreeable, that it was necessary to remind her of the lapse of time, before she ordered her carriage to Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER XXX.

LADY EDITH, in compliance with her aunt's wishes, who was to accompany her to the first representation of the new opera, was early in her box. The performance had begun some time, when the door opened, and Lord de Lisle entered, but it was not for his lordship's sole use, the "two chairs" had been reserved. He led in an exquisitely lovely girl, whose careless and unfashionable attire, together with her *evident* wonder and admiration of the theatre, bespoke her new to London, at least to the *élite* of London, who never wonder or admire.

Edith recognized, with a mixture of pain and plea-

sure, the good-natured Marion Gray, who had so frankly forgiven her rudeness at Deerhurst. She was really pleased to see her again, but pained at the recollection of her illiberal remarks on the gentleman by whom she was now attended, and who introduced his beautiful companion as Lady de Lisle. She was placed at the front of the box, that she might see and hear. Even Lady Edith never excited half the admiration that was bestowed on the fair stranger. Every eye was turned on her—every one was curious to know who she was, and whence she came. The almost exploded orange-flowers, which were wreathed in her luxuriant hair, bespoke her a wife, a bride; and the unknown possessor of so much loveliness, was certainly not without a fair portion of envy that night.

Lady Edith Clavering was amply compensated for the sacrifice of her seat to the charmed Lady de Lisle. Fitzroy Poyntz came in, and placing himself by her, appeared to forget his original motive for coming there, in the pleasure of talking scarcely above a whisper to his fair companion.

Edith looked very pretty and elegant, and her dress of pale pink satin gave a colour to her complexion, it now too often wanted:—she was happy, and her happiness made her delightful to all around her. She answered Marion's thousand and one questions, with perfect patience and good humour, and was even tolerably courteous to Lord de Lisle. Before they parted, she learnt from his lordship, that he had brought his bride to London, for a short time, and that they were at Warren's.

Lady Edith professed her intention of calling on

Lady de Lisle, on the following Monday, and presented tickets for her approaching ball.

An opera, like every thing else in this mutable world, will end. Edith thought the one on this evening, over unreasonably soon, even for a Saturday night. The Marquis of Ellesmere protected Lady Catherine, and a certain Mr. De Clifford, Lady Emily, through the perils of a crush,—and Edith, once more supported by Mr. Poyntz, bore on this occasion, with extraordinary patience, that which usually gave her so much annoyance,—the delay in the drawing up of her carriage: indeed like the finale to the past amusement, it appeared to come too soon.

Exhausted with the fatigue and utter sleeplessness of the previous night, she sought her room immediately on reaching home, and requesting her maid to be very expeditious, she was soon in bed, and found that repose she so much needed:—her sleep was sweet and tranquil, her dreams bright and pleasing, and she arose in the morning refreshed for the duties of a day, she never omitted to keep sacred. Lady Catherine, in her curiosity relative to the beautiful bride, and her anxiety to know who, and what she was, forgot to comment on Lady Edith's unknown companion, and no remarks were made by Lady Emily, who began to see a little of what was passing. She too had thought the opera very quickly over,—the difficulties of getting to the carriage nothing,—and Mr. De Clifford singularly agreeable.

Sunday came, and found Lady Edith prepared for its duties. She attended Mrs. Halford twice to the church of the parish in which she resided, and had

retired to her dressing-room, intending to remain there until the family party met at dinner. She had been there about half an hour, when a knock at the door announced a visitor, and Mrs. Halford entered. Edith's heart sunk within her; she felt that an intrusion on an hour she habitually spent in serious reading, even on the part of her dearest, earliest friend, could arise only from some extraordinary motive; her conscience told her what it was: she tried to receive Mrs. Halford with smiles, and an unembarrassed countenance, but it would not do:—her smile forsook her, her cheek became pale, as her friend, scarcely less agitated than herself, took a seat beside her.

"Edith, my child," she said, "you are surprised to see me at this hour; but your own heart tells you the purport of my visit. I will not insult you by apologizing for the part I am about to take; were you indeed my own child, I should feel it my duty to speak as I am now about to speak, and ——"

"And, am I not your own child, dear, dear Mrs. Halford?" murmured Edith, throwing herself at her feet, and burying her face in her lap—"speak," she continued, "tell me all you think—how you condemn, how you despise me."

"My poor child!" returned the amiable woman, distressed by an humility for which she had been so unprepared,—“I do not despise, I scarcely condemn you, but I would in the full spirit of tenderness and pity, tell you what I think."

She then, in the mildest and most delicate manner, proceeded to state to Edith, the result of her observations made at Tryst Hurst, which convinced her of her growing attachment to Mr. Poyntz. Obser-

ventions, too, on her conduct in town, pained her still more, for from that she drew the inference, that Edith not only cherished her misplaced attachment, but that she omitted no opportunity of seeing an object it were better to forget.

Having said this much, Mrs. Halford proceeded to the most distressing part of her duty :—to tell Edith, not only of the persuasion she felt, that she was an object of indifference to him, but that he was really devoted to another. She felt Edith shudder under these last words ; she raised her pale and tearful face from the spot on which she had hidden it, and laying her head tenderly on her bosom, she continued to recount every particular of Edith's conduct, which had struck her as capricious and improper for some time past. She entreated her to stop ere it was too late, to avoid seeking, or even seeing Mr. Poyntz,—and to call to her aid that religion in which she had been so early instructed, and which would teach her how to suffer, if such were to be her lot. Much more was urged by this good woman ; and then she said, “ Now Edith, my child, look up : promise me, you will at least think on what I have said, and that in a short time you will no longer fear to see me, to tell me all that passes in your pure breast. At present the secret is our own, but if you do not materially change your conduct, it cannot long remain so.”

“ I will change my conduct, dearest madam ; I will be all you wish,” said the weeping girl. “ I will never seek Mr. Poyntz ; but oh, do not tell me to forget him, that were indeed impossible.”

“ For some time, perhaps, it may be,” said the judicious friend,—“ but we shall return to Belmont,

and in that sweet place, amid your manifold duties, you will at least remember with less intensity, what can never be other than a source of misery to you."

"Would that we could quit this hateful London directly!" returned Edith. "But this birth-day,—the ball, which will be only irksome to me, must detain us yet a while; still three days to it:—and then a drawing-room, which my father is so determined on my appearing at."

"And which will detain you in London, only one week longer;—at the expiration of that short period, I will plead your health, (I fear, with too much truth,) as a reason for our going to Belmont, some time sooner than usual. In the interim, let me not feel that your own admirable sense, your early precepts have all been given in vain. It was not for your hours of sunshine, that you were blessed with the one, or that the others were so carefully instilled into you; in this your first trial let them not fail you."

Edith gratefully thanked her kind monitress, for her timely warning; confessing the truth of all she said, and also the utter hopelessness she felt on the subject of Mr. Poyntz. With him, listening to his melodious voice, she was enchanted, and she was happy; but away from him, allowing herself to reason dispassionately, she felt there was nothing to hope, for there had not been any thing in the manner of Mr. Poyntz, to mislead her. She had seen him far more devoted to his cousin, the Duchess of Belton, infinitely more so to Gertrude Walcot. She had only herself to blame,—but still she was, and ever must be wretched!—so argued Edith Clavering.

The party met at dinner. Lady Catherine thought,

and remarked, that her niece looked very ill, and that she should be glad to hear a time was fixed for their journey to the North. Mrs. Halford seconded her ladyship. And the duke, on hearing her opinion, said, he had observed Lady Edith looking delicate, and immediately after the drawing-room, every thing should be in readiness for the ladies to travel at a moment's warning.

"Is my appearance quite indispensable at the next drawing-room?" timidly inquired Edith of her father.

"Absolutely so," was the laconic reply.

Wednesday was the ball to be given in honour of the birth of the heiress of Belmont. The Wednesday after, the drawing-room; and on the day following, it was decided that Lady Edith, with her aunt, and Mrs. Halford, were to commence their journey northwards.

The duke still found it necessary to remain within reach of Windsor, or St. James's. Monday and Tuesday passed away without any event which was likely to try the stability of Lady Edith's resolve of her heart,—of the thoughts of that heart I have nothing to say. She maintained a cheerful deportment, at least,—did not once order her carriage in the direction of St. Stephen's Chapel,—rode twice with the marquis,—and inflicted on herself the real privation of not attending the Opera on the Tuesday night; because she knew the duchess was to be there, accompanied by her cousin.

By midnight the rooms thrown open in the splendid mansion of the Duke of Belmont were filled,—not crowded, as at her Grace of Belton's. The lovely heroine

of the night had not anticipated one spark of pleasure from the homage she should receive, or from the gaiety and admiration that awaited her. She was very simply dressed, and looked extremely well:—she exerted herself too to appear gay and happy, and succeeded so well, that the duke almost repented having allowed her to quit town so soon.

In passing from one room to the other, Lady Edith saw her father talking to the little Duchess of Belton, who was leaning on the arm, not of her husband, but of her cousin Fitzroy Poyntz. She stood for a moment petrified,—she, however, advanced to meet the party who were coming towards her, and received the apologies of her grace, for presuming to bring, uninvited, Mr. Poyntz.

“I have,” she said, “made my peace with the duke, who has been graciously pleased to accept my excuses. The truth is, my dear Lady Edith, my lord duke is most unexpectedly called out of town; and I must either have given up the pleasure of congratulating you on your birth-day, or rather night, or avail myself, as I have done, of my cousin’s escort. I never go out, as you know, unless specially attended. I find you only dance one quadrille to-night; when it is ended, I shall hope to lure you to our quiet and fragrant seat in this window.”

The duchess and her companion then seated themselves in a situation at once cool, comparatively quiet, and where they had an excellent view of the dancers. Lady Edith began the ball with a foreign prince, then in England. She danced beautifully, and looked very lovely; her dress was of rich, figured, white satin, made perfectly plain; her arms and neck

were encircled with pearls and turquoises, the gift of her father, and a tiara of the same pretty gems was worn amid her fair hair. She attracted universal admiration, although Lady de Lisle was, without exception, the most beautiful woman in the room;—in her, however, there was a total want of either elegance or style. She was a star in a provincial ball-room, but only an exquisitely pretty woman in a London assembly of rank and fashion; she had abundance of titled partners, and looked happy, and astonished at every thing.

“Say what you will,” observed the Duchess of Belton to her cousin, “there certainly is something very decided in rank and fashion. Now, only look at those two beautiful women, standing together in that quadrille:—that pretty bride, in her gossamer-looking dress, is incomparably handsomer than Lady Edith; but who would think of preferring Lady de Lisle, the provincial lady, to the high-born, elegant daughter of the Duke of Belmont?”

“No one, certainly,” said Fitzroy; “but——”

“But what?” asked the duchess, seeing him hesitate; “I do not believe you half admire Lady Edith Clavering as we all do,—as she ought to be admired.”

“Yes,” returned Fitzroy, looking at her, as she was led to her seat by her noble partner; “but, when I wish to know if I thoroughly, freely admire a woman, I always ask myself this question:—Should I like her for my wife? I cannot look at beauty abstractedly.”

“Then,” said the Duchess, “of course you admire no one. You would not, I conclude, like every pretty

woman you see for your wife. It therefore follows, you admire none."

"Just so;" replied Mr. Poyntz.—"I very rarely do admire a woman; I have no time to think of them. In the matter of Lady Edith, I did ask myself the question; and the answer was—No: still, having seen much of her, I admit she is every way worthy to be admired by the world in general. I never saw but one woman who could stand the test of my admiration."

"And that woman is Gertrude Walcot.—She is a splendid person; but she will never be your wife, Fitzroy."

"That I believe; but of *this* I am sure, no other woman ever will."

"Ah! Lady Edith," exclaimed the Duchess, as that young lady approached her, "you are come in good time to break in on a most extraordinary conversation."

Mr. Poyntz resigned his chair to Edith, and, leaning over the back of it, joined in a lively colloquy with the two ladies. The ball went off admirably;—the supper, though very splendid, was less agreeable than the one of the preceding week, —at least so thought the fair mistress of the revels. The Duc de — was very, very polite; but he was not Fitzroy Poyntz;—the latter retired with the Duchess at an early hour.

Her Grace was anxious Lady Edith should dine with her, *tête-a-tête*, on the following day, the last of her stay in London. She was impatient to claim her little boy, and on Friday was to leave town for Tryst Hurst;—she added, "I shall be quite alone;—

Fitzroy will, perhaps, come in afterwards, *pour prendre congé*, and bring his despatches for his lady mother."

Edith's virtuous resolution almost failed her; but she remembered Mrs. Halford, and on some pretext declined her Grace's invitation. The guests departed;—all was again hushed. Edith bade Mrs. Halford good night; no pang of self-reproach assailed her:—she had withstood temptation; it was the *premier pas*;—it had cost her much, but it was over; and she could now look forward with hope to achieving far greater feats of self-denial. She slept soundly, and appeared the next morning in time to receive her father's approval of herself and her ball, and to read a very long, and not a very incorrect account of it in the newspaper.

The days that intervened between Lady Edith's ball and the drawing-room, were passed quietly, or in showing much kindness and attention to Lord and Lady de Lisle:—they dined twice in Grosvenor-square, and again occupied the box at the opera. Edith still thought him the most disagreeable man she had ever seen; but she tolerated him for the sake of his amiable wife, whose unaffected good humour compensated, even in the eyes of the refined Lady Edith, for her total want of manner and polish.

The travelling carriages were in readiness; the ladies, too, were ready; and the Duke placed his lovely daughter in her new and well-appointed britchska, promising to follow her as soon as circumstances would allow him. Lady Edith certainly left London with a less heavy heart than that with which she had entered it, and approached the magnificent

halls of Belmont with a feeling of calm, she had thought she was destined never more to know ;—the blessed result of the exercise of her own excellent reason. Her reception was, in the highest degree, flattering and soothing to her ; she was adored by the tenants and her poorer neighbours, and beloved universally. It was a brilliant afternoon when she drove into the little village, which lay at the edge of the park :—the cottagers, in holiday attire, were waiting at their doors to welcome her as she passed ; the sound of the bells, issuing from the church within the park, struck gaily on her ears ; she kissed her hand repeatedly to her humble friends ; and, when she beheld the old faithful domestics, who attended on her early years, waiting her arrival,—when she felt herself pressed to the bosom of her aged nurse,—in the arms that first held her,—the heiress of Belmont shed tears of gratitude for the blessings she possessed, and forgot to sigh for that solitary one which was denied her.

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR HERBERT LYSTER TO THE DOWAGER
LADY LYSTER.

Lytton, August 31, 183—

“ALTHOUGH prepared by former experience for the sentiments contained in your letter of yesterday, I am not the less grieved at the bitter and, pardon me, if I add, unnatural and unlady-like expression of them. Catherine Heathcote is in her grave, and ought, at least, to have been beyond the pale of your invectives. In thwarting my union with her, and bribing her father to force her into a marriage she detested, you destroyed her happiness for ever, and if time and circumstances have restored mine, I have not been less aggrieved, and that, too, by my mother: through the medium of that very Catherine,—the injured and despised Catherine Heathcote!—has that infliction fallen on your head, which you now so violently bewail. But for her sorrows and early death, I had never known the admirable woman, who in a few days will be my wife, your daughter-in-law:—it was not that she had forgotten your unfeminine treatment of her at Elphinstone, when she appeared before you as the governess of your grand-children,—that she

requested me, with so much earnestness, to write to you, and, in both our names, extend the olive-branch you have so rudely rejected;—it was from that innate nobility of soul, which is confined neither to birth nor station. In the former, Miss Walcot is decidedly our equal, and I shall be but too proud to be the happy instrument of restoring her to that place in society, of which she was, for a short time, deprived, by the death of her father. To Miss Walcot your obligations, my dear madam, are manifold:—she has restored your son to happiness, and has saved one daughter, if not from vice, (for Fanny was ever pure and good,) at least from the odious follies of her sisters, through her instrumentality.—Mrs. Elphinstone is now every thing a wife and mother ought to be;—the errors of her miserable education are scarcely perceptible. There are passages in your letter on which I shall make no comment, lest I express myself too severely.—Let my father find rest in the grave, at least.”

The baronet concluded his letter with observing, that whenever his mother would visit Lytton, disposed to treat its future mistress with kindness and respect, she would find a welcome, and, for as long a time as she pleased, a home. The letter to which the above was a reply, was couched in the most violent language. Lady Lyster commented, in terms of the utmost virulence, on what she was pleased to term—her son’s degrading taste for low birth; instancing, in an unfeeling manner, his early love for Miss Heathcote; and calling down on his head unheard-of miseries, if he persevered in his engagement with Miss Walcot.

The letter he received at Elphinstone, whither he had accompanied his sister to meet Gertrude once more, before the morning on which he should call her his for ever. He found her in excellent health, and with that look of quiet happiness for which she was so remarkable. Her time at Hastings had passed pleasantly away;—in the retrospect of the past she saw nothing with which to reproach herself; and in the future there appeared as much happiness in store for her, as usually falls to the lot of mortals. She had always been impressed with a conviction that, under much natural indolence of character, and a morbid sensibility, induced by peculiar events, there still lurked much of talent and goodness in Herbert Lyster. The painful and interesting circumstances under which they so constantly met, necessarily brought on a degree of intimacy, which created in the breast of the “governess” an interest, for a long time, unsuspected even by herself. Her feelings for her early lover, Lord de Lisle, were never romantically warm, and had long been exchanged for contempt and indifference; for, however fair that gentleman’s character might be in the eyes of the world, his conduct to the high-minded Gertrude was a speck on it, which nothing ever could wipe away.

Herbert Lyster had not disregarded the dying injunctions of his friend; he had searched diligently in the “little book” she had given him on her death-bed, and in it he had found real consolation. The transition from poor Catherine to her friend, was at the first view sudden, but they had latterly been so associated together in all his thoughts and actions, that it was not unnatural the contemplation of her

virtues added to the admiration he had long felt for her beauty, should have had the result we have before detailed.

Mrs. Elphinstone and her little tribe had returned from Belmont after a visit there of six weeks. She spoke of the beautiful heiress in terms of the highest admiration : of her urbanity as a hostess,—of her excellence, as the mistress of her numerous domestics,—of her quiet and unostentatious charities,—of her zeal in promoting every thing tending to the improvement and amelioration of the poor within her sphere,—of her splendid hospitality,—of her mild and elegant manners to all around her. But while she eulogised her for her virtues, she spoke with affectionate regret of her altered appearance and spirits : her health was decidedly delicate,—her cheek had lost its rich bloom,—her figure its exquisite symmetry,—her step its elasticity. For this change, (observed by all), no one pretended to account ; to Mrs. Halford, and to Gertrude only was it known. In the pure breast of the altered girl, the secret lay buried deep ; she had struggled, not unsuccessfully ; she discharged her various duties as we have recorded, with cheerfulness and alacrity. But at the period at which my history closes, her manner, though invariably courteous, was such as to preclude all hope of her soon making her election from amongst the number of her admirers.

Mr. Fitzroy Poyntz had been selected, under a different state of affairs, as a fit person to be employed on a delicate and confidential mission, and was now pursuing his journey to a distant country. The image of Gertrude Walcott sometimes mingled in his abstruser reflections ; but of the devoted, enthusiastic

being, who vainly endeavoured to banish him from her "heart of hearts," he never thought.

The Duke of Belmont, disappointed at home and abroad, turned his attention to agriculture, and gave up politics in despair. He had, however, lived to see some of his favourite projects perfected, and could he have beheld his darling Edith well and happy, even though unmarried, he would have been contented,—at least, so he thought. But the restlessness of the politician was still in his heart. He longed again for the excitement created by, and constituting half the charm of, those measures for which he had laboured, as he believed, purely from love of his country.

The merry-hearted Lady Emily Maitland became, before the commencement of another season, the wife of Mr. De Clifford. The marquis still remembered Edith with too much affection to offer his title to a more willing fair one. She was, however, his warmest friend, and no one was so truly welcome to Belmont, as the Marquis of Ellesmere.

Of the other minor characters of my book, there is little to say. The Countess of Oakeley proved herself worthy in every way of her mother and her governess. She was magnificent in all she did, but cold-hearted, selfish, and narrow-minded. She gave birth to more girls, destined to the neglect and unkindness experienced by their sisters. Consigned from their nurse's arms to the care, or more properly speaking, to the custody of a miserable second-rate governess, they passed their early years in acquiring an education as defective as that bestowed by Madame Gautier on their mother. Equally vain and selfish, they grew up to despise her, and in their turn to commit

the same fatal errors which had made them what they were.

Lady Oakeley could have forgiven, and even tolerated, every folly or secret vice of her sister, Lady Frederick Howard, but her open dereliction from the straight path of propriety, she never forgave. And when she heard of the luckless, guilty Julia, deserted by her betrayer, dying in misery and disease, and what to her was poverty, she refused not only a small portion of her thirty thousand per annum, but desired her name might never more offend her ears. Dying and wretched, the unfortunate wife of Lord Frederick Howard was conveyed to a farm-house on the Lytton estate; there every comfort had been provided for her by her brother and his amiable wife. Together they soothed her bed of sickness, together they talked to the poor sufferer of a world to come,—of repentance, hope, mercy; together they again knelt by the bed of death; and if the weak and unprepared mind of Julia were incapable of receiving in their full force, the truths so mildly, so judiciously offered, they had the satisfaction, at least, of seeing her resigned, grateful, uncomplaining; and whilst these christian friends listened to her last low and troubled breathing, received her last sigh in their bosoms, they ventured to hope, with trembling, that her sins had been forgiven her.

The children of the wretched pair found a home, and each endearing tie at Elphinstone. They inherited their mother's delicate beauty, with the frank and affectionate good humour of their father; and the education they received from the lady appointed to succeed Miss Walcot, was such as to insure them

happiness in this world, and in the next. It was a christian education, not unfitting them for the situation, which, as grand-daughters of a duke, they were destined to fill; but enabling them best to adorn it, best to give from their own high estate, an example which, if more frequently offered, would most assuredly have the happiest effects on those ever so disposed to imitate the manners of the great and influential.

Lord Frederick Howard buried in a foreign land, the victim of his selfish passion, and the child of their mutual guilt. But he returned not to his own country, now rendered hateful to him, more by the disgrace entailed on him by his wife, than by the remembrance of the part he had so unworthily played in it. He ever expressed the warmest gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone: that good man and his virtuous little wife, found their chief reward in the affection of these deserted children, and in seeing the care and anxiety which was lavished on them, not bestowed in vain. In their own lovely girls, they saw hourly the blessed effects of the precepts so happily instilled, —of the example so unceasingly afforded them by Gertrude Walcot. Clever, intelligent, and rational, they were early taught that they were responsible beings; they were early taught to know and reverence the Source whence all their many blessings were derived; and, young as they both were, when Miss Walcot left them, they thought of her, and spoke of her ever as a superior person,—one who had made “mamma and all of them so happy;” and who had first taught them so many useful employments and amusements. Parting with their beloved friend was a severe trial to their young hearts; even the assurance

that Miss Walcot would soon, very soon, be "aunt Gertrude," was for some time small consolation; "she would then live at Lytton, far off, and they should no longer see her, hear her, or walk with her." A promise that the ensuing Christmas was to be spent with her at her own house, alone consoled them. In the month of November, Mrs. Elphinstone added another infant treasure to her nursery, and the little stranger received a fonder welcome on being introduced as a second Gertrude. Its sweet mother prayed it might inherit each grace and virtue attached to the name.

Of all who remembered the day when the "governess" entered Elphinstone, none more truly blessed it than its master. He saw his wife, once indolent and capricious, transformed by good example into an active and rational woman. Without being what is generally called clever, Fanny had the good sense to see her errors and the courage to correct them; she was now a fond and a judicious mother; and acknowledged that hunting, shooting, and delaying a dinner, were very inadequate causes for matrimonial discontent.

In a few years the death of the Earl of Malden, which was shortly followed by that of his son, raised Mr. Elphinstone to the peerage; and Fanny, as Countess of Malden, whilst she found a wider field for the display of her virtues, maintained the same unaffected simplicity of manner and sweetness of demeanour, which had made her so much beloved as Mrs. Elphinstone.

Of Lord de Lisle and his pretty wife, I would fain say a few words; but they are just the sort of people

of whom very little *can* be said. His lordship was, as Lord Graham once remarked, an active and excellent landlord, a kind and judicious mediator,—a prophet in his own country : he was, too, a very good husband, that is, he allowed his wife all reasonable indulgences,—remembered her with fidelity when absent from her, and took her on his different excursions when circumstances allowed him; but, as a companion,—the intellectual and enlightened companion, we must not mention him.

Gertrude Walcot would have been wretched with him ; for not all her power of beauty or talent would have changed his long-formed habits, nor would all her fine sense have availed any thing in reconciling her to pursuits and feelings so different to her own. In his choice of Marion Gray, Lord de Lisle made an excellent selection : just wise enough to escape the odium of folly, she was contented to divide his time and his affection with his hunters. He was proud of her beauty, as it was exhibited at the provincial balls and races, and it never occurred to him to wish for that superiority of intellect which he fancied he had admired in Miss Walcot ; he hunted, shot, and slept ; her ladyship became the mother of children as lovely as herself, and she and her husband passed through life with the reputation of being a “very happy couple,” and so they were, according to the ideas generally formed of married felicity.

It was a bright and happy morning, that, which witnessed the progress of the little procession, as it passed through the halls of Elphinstone, and wound along the narrow path which led to the village

church, situated within the park, and so near the house, as to render a carriage superfluous, and even ridiculous. Gertrude, the tranquil Gertrude, leaned on the arm of Mr. Elphinstone, and on that of her early and revered friend the Dean of ——. Fanny, with Herbert, and the four little girls (the latter as attendants on their beloved Miss Walcot) followed. The children who composed the school first instituted by the "governess," met them, and scattered at their feet the bright flowers of autumn, an offering of far greater value to her for whom it was particularly intended, than any that could have been made her! Her grateful but humble friends were allowed to enter the church, and witness a ceremony which was to deprive them of her who, for many months, had watched over their welfare and improvement.

Gertrude and Herbert Lyster stood before the altar; both listened with seriousness and awe to the words which, once pronounced, united them for ever;—both felt the importance of the obligation they thus took on themselves; Gertrude maintained her usual composure. Fanny wept incessantly during the ceremony, whilst the youthful bridesmaids, "beautiful as young," looked with awe at the impressive scene before them;—all was over that was necessary to make Gertrude Walcot and Herbert Lyster man and wife. They knelt at the feet of the venerable man, through whose agency they had assumed these sacred characters, and with a voice feeble indeed from age, and almost inarticulate from feeling, he implored a blessing on their heads;—silently but ear-

nestly, Elphinstone and Fanny joined in the hallowed prayer. Their children lifted their little hands too, for they understood that it was for their friend, their own dear friend, that all were praying; whilst the village-girls, kneeling around, sobbed with feelings of mingled pain and pleasure.

The splendid carriage which was to convey the beautiful bride to her husband's house waited at the church-door. Gertrude turned to fold in her arms, the darling objects of her past care and anxiety: her fortitude forsook her, and after tenderly embracing them, and pressing to her heart, again and again, their sweet mother, she was conducted by Elphinstone to her carriage, exhausted by previous exertion and deep feeling. The happy bridegroom followed, and amid the adieux of their affectionate friends, smiling through tears, they were driven rapidly from a spot endeared to both by many fond recollections.

The party returned to the house: Fanny was not to be comforted, although ready to acknowledge the selfishness of her regret. She had gained a sister, it is true; but what was to compensate to her for the loss of her friend,—her companion, the monitress to whom she owed so much? Nothing but the recollection of her virtues; and fervently did she pray she might have strength given her to emulate them. The children forgot, for a while, their grief, in the pleasure of presiding at the dinner given to Miss Walcot's little school-girls; it was long before they could forget this familiar name in that of "Aunt Gertrude;"—it was the one by which they had first known, first loved her, and it was the one by which they still loved to designate her.

I have not time to follow Lady Lyster to her new home; at least, I must linger there but a few moments. I might tell of the reception that awaited her, of the joy and surprise of the tenantry who lined the way as the bridal party passed by, at seeing at last a lady at Lytton who bowed kindly and smilingly to their respectful welcome,—of the delight of the poor at the prospect before them, of which they believed the sweet look and condescending manner of the new lady a good earnest—of the pride of the happy baronet as he presented his beautiful wife to the neighbouring families, who, long since disgusted by the haughtiness of the Dowager Lady Lyster, had ceased all communication with Lytton Park. These circumstances I might descant on, but I must content myself with assuring those of my readers, who have followed me thus far, that Gertrude, beloved by her husband, admired and respected by her friends, found as much happiness in her married career, as she had ever anticipated. She had passed the age of romance, and neither expected nor desired to find in her husband the exclusive devotion of the lover; but she found, what was far better, the mild and intelligent companion, the faithful friend, the sharer in all her joys, the tender participator in her sorrows,—for sorrow would come even to Gertrude, but only to try still more her steady faith: to show her in a more exalted light, to show her, kissing meekly the iron rod of affliction. She lost, in quick succession, her first three lovely infants, but as she had received them as treasures lent, so she resigned them without a murmur, to those hands whence they had been bestowed. With fear and trembling she folded to her bosom her

fourth precious gift : it was spared to her prayers, and she proved herself as admirable in the sweet character of a mother, as in every other in which she had appeared. I conclude my imperfect sketch of her in the words of holy writ : " Her children arise up, and call her blessed ; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

CONCLUSION.

IN presenting my little work to the Public, I am fully aware of the criticism and the censure to which I expose myself; if, however, I succeed in bringing the subject on which I have principally written, into discussion, I shall be satisfied. My labour will not have been in vain; for I am persuaded, it is one which, if freely and impartially canvassed, must be amended. I am prepared for the numerous objections that will be brought forward to my plan of placing the "Governess," on an equality with the mistress of the Family. One will be,—and I admit it to be a difficulty, that it is impossible children can be left to the care of servants, whilst their instructress is engaged in the drawing-room. In the higher ranks, however, this cannot be adduced as an argument against the admission of the Governess into the drawing-room at least: either the girls are of such an age as to be received there themselves, or so young as to be in bed before (in consequence of the late hours of the great) they assemble together. Only let the system of liberality and perfect respect be introduced, and invariably practised by the high-born and influential, and I will venture to predict, the example will be generally followed. Two effects would result

from this. First, no lady would receive into her house any other than a well educated and perfect gentlewoman; and in a very short time there would be only ladies of high talent and character to be obtained. The wretched race of low-born, ignorant, and vulgar governesses would be lost; they would have returned to the shop, or the farm-house, from which they ought never to have been taken in the important character of an instructress of youth.

Again, it will be urged, that in marrying my heroine to Sir Herbert Lyster, I have brought forward weapons against myself,—as showing the probable consequence of my equalizing system; but the *candid* reader will not fail to have observed, that it was as the intimate friend of Lady Trevor, Sir Herbert Lyster first loved Gertrude Walcot,—as his sister's governess, he never had,—most likely never would have thought of her in any other light.

Before quitting the subject of education entirely, I cannot help suggesting, that it were well if religion mixed a little more with the numerous arts and sciences taught to the rising generation. I cannot give my own sentiments on this point, better than by quoting the words of the admirable, the enlightened Jay. "The young need Christ; the sooner they are brought to him the better: the sooner will they be prevented injuring society: the sooner will they enter on a course of usefulness, during which they will scatter a thousand blessings. If we do good to an old man, it is all important to himself; but it goes off with him. Whereas, the good communicated to a child, is not only valuable personally, but relatively. It descends from him, and is spread by him, as he

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rises up and multiplies in life: and the result of the whole cannot be estimated." "Let those that *have* and those that *are* children, think of this, and be encouraged. Another flower thus offered can never arrive at perfection; it must wither and die. But this flower shall live and blossom as a rose. The Redeemer will put it into his bosom: and the fragrance shall spread through the church below, and through the temple above."

With one more quotation, also from an able pen, I have done.

"I know of no employment in which a Christian woman can be more profitably engaged, than in watching over the spiritual and mental improvement of children."

That clever and Christian women only may be selected for this most important of all duties, is my earnest wish. And that the pages I now send forth may tend in some degree to procure for them, even in this world, the reward of their blessed labour,—of their disinterested care and anxiety, I shall never cease to pray.

